THE MIRACLE OF CALCUTTA

By
MANUBEHN GANDHI

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The Authoress with Bapu

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BY

MANUBEHN GANDHI

Translated from the original in Gujarati

BY

GOPALRAO KULKARNI

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In December 1946 Manubehn joined Gandhiji and lived with him till the end of his life. How very crucial these days were in the life of the Nation and of Gandhiji, needs no description. Often, during these days, Manubehn was his only companion. She used to keep a daily record of this period. As a part of her education, Gandhiji had asked her to do it, and would look through it every day. Undoubtedly therefore, this diary is a rare and most authentic record of Gandhiji's daily routine, his activities and of his inner struggles. Portions of the diary have already appeared in a few periodicals. Our publication, *Bapu — My Mother** also covers some incidents.

From Noakhali Gandhiji went to Kashmir. From there he wanted to go back straight to Noakhali. This return journey begins from 1st August '47, wherefrom this book also begins.

On reaching Calcutta, Gandhiji found that the city was in the grip of communal frenzy. Murder, arson and loot were the order of the day. He therefore, postponed his going to Noakhali. And in a couple of days only, thank God, he could restore peace in the city. On the 15th August, the 1st day of our Independence, there were mixed processions of Hindus and Muslims and scenes of the fraternization could be seen throughout the city. But this proved to be a nine days' wonder only. For there was fresh outbreak of violence and on a larger scale. Gandhiji, then, in obedience to

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the call within, resorted to fast—his supreme and unfailing weapon. In the words of Shri Pyarelal, "Then the miracle happened. As the leaden hours crept by and slowly life ebbed out of the frail little man on the fasting bed, it caused a deep heart-churning in all concerned, bringing the hidden lie to the surface. People came and confessed to him what they would have confided to no mortal ear. Hindus and Muslims combined in an all-out effort to save the precious life that was being offered as ransom for disrupted peace against brother and brother. Mixed processions consisting of all communities paraded through the affected parts of the city to restore communal harmony." The reader will find all this description in the course of these pages.

While his efforts to bring peace in the city were still continuing, disturbing news from Punjab were daily pouring in. Large-scale rioting had broken out in the State with no signs of abating. He therefore decided to go to Punjab. He left Calcutta on 7th September, reached Delhi, but could not proceed further as Delhi itself was affected by serious riots. His post-prayer speeches in Delhi from 10-9-'47 to 30-1-'48 have been collected in a separate book entitled *Delhi Diary*.* That the future of India and Pakistan rests on communal harmony and goodwill is as clear as daylight. The inspiring life-story of Gandhiji as narrated herein by Manubehn as her diary (from 1-8-'47 to 7-9-'47) certainly shows the way towards that end.

20-7-'59

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THE MIRACLE OF CALCUTTA

CHAPTER I

TRIP TO KASHMIR

Friday, 1-8-1947

Attended prayers at 3.45 a.m. Bapu did some writing after prayers. Left Ravalpindi for Shrinagar by car at 5.15 a.m. The whole road was banked by green grass; there was no trace of heat anywhere. Bapu's car was passing through a canopy of lofty trees. This was his first visit to Kashmir. The road was like a running spiral and the driver had to drive very cautiously. It was now an upward slope and the next moment it was a steep descent! As the car passed through towering trees and shrubs, they extended him their welcome by the music of their rustling leaves. At 12 noon we halted for a short while at a village named Rampur. Bapu took a bath and ate some fruit. We too took our meals. We left Rampur at 1 p.m.

The road from Rampur to Shrinagar is beautiful. Our car ascended the hills and again descended. Bapuji too, setting aside his reading and writing, began to observe the beauty of nature. Whole villages were out to obtain Bapu's *darshan*. Our car was stopped at several places. One could ill afford to look down at the deep valley below for fear of being overcome by faintness. At the bottom, were spread carpets of green grass, where cows grazed at leisure. The beautiful women of Kashmir, accompanied by their handsome children, were working in the fields. We envied their lot when we saw them from our car. Their huts too were surrounded by the green

exuberance. We have to spend thousands to get the satisfaction of spreading artificial carpets in our rooms, but the real beauty of nature can be seen only in Kashmir. The clouds too were travelling at full speed —as if with the desire of overtaking Bapu. Having travelled through this charming scenery we finally arrived at the outskirts of Shrinagar. There was a big crowd of people shouting slogans of "Long live Sheikh Abdullah" and "Long live Gandhiji". In Kashmir Muslims are in majority, but a stranger cannot distinguish who among them are Hindus and who Muslims. There were a few with black flags shouting "Long live Pakistan", but their voices were drowned in the great uproar of the people.

Begum Abdullah joined us when we were three miles away from the city, and took her seat in Bapu's car. Since her husband was in jail she managed all his affairs. The Begum is an educated and a loving woman. Bapu talked to her about Abha's and my sickness. He said to her, "Take charge of these two foolish girls and send them back cured. I have brought them to entrust them to your care." The Begum treated us like her own daughters and showered on us a mother's love.

At Shrinagar we stayed at Shri Kishorlal Shetti's place. The house was so situated that people could have easy access to it from all sides. Therefore, not only was Bapu harassed due to constant flow of masses, but also the large garden of the bunglow was ruined. Though the house was a big one with a vast compound, yet it was too small to accommodate the visitors. Moreover, Bapu was already tired after a full day's journey.

The Begum took Bapu out for a night drive with

the intention of providing him some peace. The entire city was illuminated to celebrate the joining of Gilgit to Kashmir State. We saw the famous temple of Shankaracharya which was situated on a hill. The temple being on the top of the hill, the auspicious lamp of ghee with its twinkling flame presented an attractive sight on that dark night.

We returned home at 10 p.m. Bapu could do very little writing and reading today. He could not meet many people either. Nor could I write down the names of his visitors. Throughout the day, Bapu took fruits only.

Saturday, 2-8-1947

Woke up at 3.30 a.m.; washed and cleaned my mouth, and then attended prayers. Bapu sat down to write, but visitors began to flock in. We persuaded them to go back and return in the evening for prayers. Bapuji did not go out for his usual walk, but strolled within the compound instead. We were with him. He said to Abhabahen and me, "I would very much like you to stay here. I shall ask Sushila also to stay." We replied, "No, Bapuji. We do not want to stay. We shall go with you." Abhabahen was not further pressed to stay, but the doctors, even more than Bapu himself, brought great pressure to bear on me. I was much disturbed. But the constant influx of visitors did not give me chance to have a talk with Bapu. When, at night, he enquired about my health, I replied, "There is no real temperature. But the doctors would certainly raise my temperature by insisting on my staying here. But I am not going to leave you. Have you not promised me never to keep me away from you? Why do you not tell the

doctors so? You told me that I could do whatever I chose, but at the same time you ask the doctors to persuade me to stay." Bapuji laughed at this expression of resentment and added that he was just testing me. He finally declared, "I shall do nothing against the wishes of the girls. I am strict with them when occasion demands. But I do not wish to be strict in this matter."

We had a good round talk during the walk. Then Bapu had a massage and bath. Pandit Kak came to meet him at 9 a.m. and was with him for about an hour.

Bapu's chief diet was fruit. The *babugosha*, a speciality of Kashmir, resembles the guava; it is very sweet and soft. Even the apples are unusually large and red. There is an abundance of apricots, almonds and pista which we could pick fresh from the garden. Bapu said, "Only fools would cook in this place, and harm their health and waste their time by adding condiments to *dal* and vegetables." He asked us to go round Shrinagar and added, "I have taken you to a number of cities, but I have never asked you to go sight-seeing in any of them. But it would be wrong on my part if I do not suggest that you see Shrinagar. I cannot go. But you must see this beautiful town."

So Abhabahen and I went to see Shrinagar escorted by Khansaheb's son Valibhai. We saw not only the beauties of nature but also the lovely arts and crafts produced by the industrious Kashmiris. Nobody is idle; not even children. They are always at some work or other. Some keep silkworms, while others use their craftmanship to produce boxes, dishes, tables, chairs and other pieces of woodwork.

The people of Kashmir are stalwart in body. Their cheeks are red with an abundance of vigorously coursing blood, and they are ever smiling and friendly. But this natural beauty has been spoiled by fashionable visitors who use lipstick, powder and rouge on their pale unhealthy faces. This artificiality seemed out of place in the rustic beauty of Kashmir. We were sorry that city folk who visit Kashmir to enjoy its cool climate spoil her simple people. About this, Bapuji remarked as follows: "We have not imitated from the West their virtues, but having accepted with great zeal undesirable things from them, as if they were our eternal heritage, we have spoiled others. This is criminal on our part."

Pandit Kak, workers of the National Conference, members of the Hindu Navajavan Sangh and members of the Students' Federation interviewed Bapu today. The gist of the advice he gave them all was: "Be clean from within as well as from without. Remain pure and lead a life that would be in harmony with Kashmir's natural beauty. This will lead you to success."

At 4 p.m. Bapuji went to Shahi Chashma to meet the Rajguru. He returned at 5 p.m. Today we held a public prayer, as permission for one which had not been received so far was received today. After prayers Jawaharlal's mother-in-law and Colonel Chopra came to see Bapuji. Having spent the whole day in meeting people, Bapu went to bed at 10 p.m.

Shrinagar,
Sunday, 3-8-1947

Got up at 3.30 a.m. for prayers. Attended prayers after mouth wash. Bapuji completed his article for

the *Harijan*. He took eight ounces of fruit juice and then went for a walk. On his return, he had a bath and got ready to receive Pandit Kak at 9 a.m. The interview lasted about an hour. Bapuji lay down for half an hour after his visitor had departed. He did not sleep but wrote out some matter in a reclining position. At 11 a.m. workers of the National Conference came for an interview. They asserted that they wanted to merge with the Indian Union and get Sheikh Abdullah released. Bapuji told them that God would help them if they remained firm in their determination. At 12 noon he went to meet the Maharaja and returned at 1.30 p.m. Put mud-plaster on the abdomen. Slept for half an hour after a short talk with the Begum Saheba. At 3 p.m. we went to the office of the National Conference, but the crowd was so vast that we returned within a few minutes. Prayers were held at 5 p.m. after which Bapuji went to the ladies' meeting. He was observing his weekly silence which started every Sunday evening. The ladies' meeting was so noisy that Bapuji had to plug his ears with his finger-tips. The ladies contributed five hundred one rupees to the Harijan fund. We returned from the meeting at 8 p.m. We took a short walk and went to bed at 9.30 p.m.

Shrinagar,
Monday, 4-8-1947

Morning prayers at 3.30 a.m. As we were to leave Shrinagar at 5 a.m. we began to pack up immediately after prayers. People came down in great numbers to say good-bye to Bapuji. We started exactly at five. On the way we saw Verinag, the spring from which the river Jhelum starts. It is beautiful and

magnificent. There is a small temple of Shiva. At Anantnag, Hindus and Muslims were standing shoulder to shoulder. This sight brought a smile to Bapu's face. At 12 o'clock we halted at Beejvyara. There Bapu took a bath and drank some milk. As he had a very bad cold he rested for a while. At 2 p.m. we started for Jammu.

The road from Shrinagar to Jammu is far more beautiful than that from Ravalpindi to Shrinagar. We came across the Chinab which was flowing with great speed. Today she was in floods and it seemed that she was mad with joy to see Bapu's car passing, as if she would never see the great man again! The road was full of turns and looked like a running serpent.

We reached Jammu at 4.30 p.m., but it took another half an hour to reach home, as we had to make our way through great mass of people assembled. Bapuji took his bath and spun in spite of a severe headache due to cold. We left for prayers at 7 p.m. People pressed Bapuji to go in a car as the crowd was great. He replied, "It is always safe to walk when there are big crowds, and women can give me better protection. You should make women stand in front lines of both sides of the road, so that men do not rush at their cordons to fall at my feet. Ladies have saved me many a time like this. I have made this experiment before."

Women lined up on both sides and he made his way to the prayer grounds without much difficulty.

Bapuji broke his silence at prayer time. The loud-speaker was out of order, so there was noise and confusion. Hence, we brought the prayers to a rapid conclusion with the recital of *Ramanama* only and then returned to our Camp.

During our walk at 7.30 p.m. Bapuji warned Abhabahen and me that since we had refused to stay behind in Kashmir to rest and recoup our health, the responsibility of taking care of our health rested on our heads. We replied: "If we prove to be careless in the future, we shall, of our own accord, ask your permission to withdraw for a while. But, just now, we are not prepared to stay in Kashmir. When you are in strife-torn Noakhali how can we think of enjoying ourselves in Kashmir and benefiting by the climate?"

Bapuji went to bed at 10 p.m. It was raining lightly then.

Tuesday, 5-8-1947

After prayers at 3.30 a.m. Bapu did some writing. Workers from Jammu came for an interview. It was 5 a.m. by this time and we started for Ravalpindi. We rested awhile at the Surdama guest house. Bapuji had a severe cold. He drank some milk and we proceeded to the Wah Camp.

There were eight thousand refugees in this camp. Raisaheb Manmohan Rai was its Commander-in-Charge. There were a number of destitute women in this camp who had lost their homes, children and husbands. There were also many orphan children. All were untidy, unwashed and unhappy. But they forgot their grief of bereavement for a time when they saw their beloved Bapuji. All of them tried to relate their tales of horror into his sympathetic ears.

There was a small women's hospital in the camp. The pitiable condition of the patients would have melted even hearts of stone. One had had bullets extracted from her chest; another had had her leg

amputated; a third had managed to escape with her day-old child; some were lying there with festering knife wounds. We could hardly bear to see the pitiable sight. Bapuji visited every patient's cot. Though the wounds of many gave out a foul smell yet Bapu approached each one of them and touching her head with his loving hand said, "Forget everything, and just keep repeating the name of *Rama*. That alone will save you. What can a poor mortal like me do?" He tried to console them with these words, and drove away flies from the bodies of the patients and covered them up properly. Bapuji trembled and muttered to himself, "What brutality! Can man become so cruel?" He spent two hours in this visit.

We then visited the class conducted by the Kasturba Trust. Sewing, embroidery, spinning, knitting etc. were taught in this class. The unhappy women forgot their grief for a time by engaging themselves in these activities.

Having witnessed such misery, I often wondered why women should be alone subjected to such atrocities. To this, Bapuji usually replied: "I have often stated that women are forbearance incarnate."

From there we left for Panjasaheb at 1.30 p.m. This is an important place of pilgrimage to the Panjabis. We visited the Gurudwara. It was beautiful and calm.

A small meeting was held at the Gurudwara. The Sikhs wanted the Union to help Panjasaheb. Bapuji replied, "One Sikh equals thousands in strength. Why should he seek the aid of others? If you Sikhs are strong no one can harm the Panjasaheb. But the Sikhs, men as well as women, have nowadays fallen prey to luxury and merriment—like

many others. In Gujarat too women have given themselves up to the pursuit of fashion etc., although to a lesser degree. I do not wish to defend them. One may drink more wine than another, but we cannot say that the one who drinks less is free from the vice. So also regarding the pursuit of amusement and entertainment. Less of fashion is in no way a virtue. But as long as there are genuine Sikhs, i.e., true disciples of Guru Nanak, nobody can harm the community."

From there we went again to the Wah Camp. Some workers came to meet Bapu before prayers. They said, "We are afraid that we shall be attacked on the 15th. Please stay with us till then, or else ask the Union Government to move us from this place." Bapuji replied, "You must stay here. You will have Dr. Sushila with you. She is a Panjabi and knows the language. I am sure that she will be the first to die in your defence, in case there is an attack." The people were very happy with this arrangement. Bapu further continued: "You want to be transferred from here before the 15th as you are afraid of Pakistan. If you are afraid, I would not allow you to leave this place even though some one arranged to have you all shifted. One should not be scared of impending danger. Pakistan has not been formed for killing others. And if she attacks you and destroys your camp, take it from me that Pakistan would destroy herself as well. What can she do after driving away all the Sikhs and Hindus? Think of this, and be not afraid. Even if the Mahommedans kill you, consider it to be death at the hands of your own brothers. We must trust in God, and hope that He will show you the right path." Having thus addressed them with an

admixture of reprimand and consolation, Bapu took their leave with a heavy heart. We left Dr. Sushila at the Wah Camp and started for Ravalpindi.

We halted an hour at Ravalpindi. Bapuji took some raisins and milk and we took our meals. We reached Ravalpindi station at 9 p.m.

A few students who belonged to the Hindu Mahasabha were waiting there. They were shouting slogans such as "Hindi is the language of Hind (India), and Hindu is the slogan of Hindus." But since nobody paid any attention to them, they gradually stopped shouting.

Our train started for Lahore at 9.35 p.m. We had to keep awake the whole night, as people disturbed us at every halt.

In this way we completed our Kashmir tour.

CHAPTER II

FROM KASHMIR TO CALCUTTA

Wednesday, 6-8-1947

Said our prayers in the train after a morning wash. After prayers, Bapuji read for a while, and then slept for some time. We got down at the Shahadara station at 7 a.m. Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru and Shri Vrajlal Nehru had come to receive Bapu. We stayed at Rameshwaribahen's house. She had received news at mid-night that Bapuji was to arrive at Lahore. She cleaned the house overnight in a great rush.

Here, we had a certain degree of peace after a long time. The house is located in a calm spot, so Bapu could rest properly.

Today, he had a good appetite, for the first time,

after a number of days. He took 12 ounces of milk, two *chapatis* and some vegetables. No interviews were allowed up to 4 p.m. This made it possible for him to have a good rest and finish his writing for the *Harijan*. His cold also was slightly less today. Bapuji prepared his report of the tour and wrote important letters to Sardar Vallabhbhai, Jawaharlalji, Rajendrababu, and Rajkumaribahen.

Interviews started at 4 p.m. A full hour was taken by Congress workers. Bapuji said it was a time of crucial test for them. He advised them to attain as much purity as possible and to sacrifice to their utmost.

We left Lahore for Patna at 7 p.m. It was very hot and the train was crowded.

When we were going to Kashmir, excited boys had flocked at the Amritsar station exhibiting black flags and shouting 'Gandhi go back'. Without doing anything to stop them, he closed his eyes, plugged his ears with his fingers and remained calm reciting *Ramanama*. These very boys had again assembled today at the same station; but this time with collections for the Harijan Fund. As soon as our train reached the station they stood up in an orderly manner, offered their apologies to Bapu and presented him with the purse. When apologizing, they said, "We were mistaken. We did not understand you. Even your four days' tour in this part of the country has changed the atmosphere and the outlook of the people. Kindly excuse us." This was far beyond expectation! Those who had formerly greeted Bapuji with black flags had now come to beg his pardon and fall at his feet with donation for Harijan Fund. What a noble victory for love! The result would have

been quite otherwise if Bapu had got angry with them or if the police had arrested the black flag demonstrators.

Bapu talked to them very tenderly and said, "Forget the past. Remember the saying, 'It is never too late to mend', and do not follow the wrong course in the future."

People came in crowds to other stations as well. It rained on the way. Our carriage got wet with leaking water. The guard came and requested Bapu to shift to another compartment.

"What will you do with this carriage?" asked Bapuji.

"We have vacated another carriage for you. The passengers from that one will be shifted here."

Bapu said, "If this carriage is to be used, why should I not use it for myself? I will not make myself comfortable by causing discomfort to others."

The guard was silenced. He then merely asked Bapu if he could be of use in any other way.

Bapuji replied, "Your duty is clear. Do not harass people and do not accept any bribes. You will serve me best by practising these two requests of mine."

We passed the night peacefully in the train. Shri Brijkrishna got down at Saharanpur and left for Delhi. We went straight on to Patna. Bapu kept himself busy writing articles for the *Harijan*.

Shri Govind Vallabh Pant, who had come to meet us at Lucknow station, pushed his way through the big crowd to our carriage. He said to me, "Better get down here. Why suffer hardships in the company of the Mahatma?" I replied, "We have to suffer if we esteem his company."

Abhabahen tried to stop people from getting on to the train for obtaining Bapu's *darshan*. Both of us asked them to contribute to the Harijan Fund. We encountered huge crowds at every station.

Our train was late by two hours. We reached Banaras station at 10.15 p.m. Bapu was sleeping. But people had been waiting for his *darshan* since 3 p.m. They greeted him with shouts of joy. Bapu woke up. He did not tolerate people shouting slogans and he therefore refused to get down. People went away disappointed and frustrated.

8-8-1947

We reached Patna station at 3.30 a.m. Dr. Syed Mahmud had come to receive us. Abhabahen and I went with Bapu in the first car. Shri Bisen and Kalyanam followed us with the luggage. After reaching our lodging we had our mouth wash and offered prayers. Both of us had had no sleep the whole night. Bapuji scolded us for keeping awake and asked us to go to sleep right after prayers. He did not allow us to work, so we rested for half an hour.

Next to Noakhali, Patna was Bapuji's main centre of work at this time. We were asked to keep our extra luggage, books etc. at Patna. We did so and put the old things in order. As we were to leave for Calcutta the same day and from Calcutta we were to go straight to Noakhali, we prepared our luggage accordingly. As Bapu had stayed at Patna before this for a fairly long period, the rush of visitors was quite heavy. Among them were Shrimati Mridulabahen who was working in Bihar as Bapuji's personal secretary, workers of the Patna Congress Committee and the Peace Committee, a deputation of the Bihar

Relief Association, Shri Kedarbabu, Gangababu, Sahjanand Saraswati, Ansari Saheb, Anugraha Narayan Sinha and a deputation of policemen. All these kept Bapu busy between 11 and 5. Before attending prayers at 5 p.m. he went upstairs to call on Mrs. Syed Mahmud who was sick. Immediately after that he drove straight to the Senate Hall, where the prayer was to be held. Bapuji explained what the people should do on the 15th of August:

> "All should fast on that day. Everyone should do his duty. The 15th of August is the day of our test. No one should create any disturbance. The Swaraj that is coming does not warrant any celebration with illuminations etc. We have not even got sufficient food grains, cloth, ghee or oil for the needs of our people. How then can we celebrate? We should fast, pray to God, and ply the Charkha on this important day. We did not have any illuminations on the 6th of April. We had observed the week, from the 6th to the 13th of April, by fasting and prayer on the first day. The 6th of April was far better than this freedom, for then brothers did not fight amongst themselves; everybody could go to temples or masjids freely and without fear.
>
> "Bihar has been built by the Charkha; perhaps it leads in the work of spinning. Shall we consign such a beautiful province to flames? She should produce its own cloth."

This was Bapu's message to Bihar. From there we went straight to the station. The train reached Bakhatiarpur station at about 9.30 p.m. The simple village people of Bihar, who had assembled at the station for Bapu's *darshan* were shouting slogans of

greeting so loudly that the noise would have affected the ears of even a strong healthy man. What then of Bapuji? He hurriedly got up and went to the window and shouted, "Why are you harassing an old man?" The people, however, were pleased to see Bapu near the window and started rushing towards him with the intention of sanctifying themselves by touching the Mahatma's body! Every one wanted to hand over his contribution to Bapu personally and there was a terrible stampede. He slapped one of them. Abha and I began to quake with fear and we caught hold of Bapu's hand. Although Bapu's slapping was due to his uncontrolled anger, the one who received it took it as a blessing from the Mahatma and another person rushed forward to receive a slap on his cheek! Abhabahen grasped the whole situation and signalled to me saying, "Those people seem to believe that a slap from the Mahatma is a blessing. We should request Bapu to move away from the window." We then told him that we would pacify the crowd if he would disappear from their sight. We started repeating *Ramanama*. The noise had somewhat subsided when our train left the station.

Our experience in Bihar has been that as soon as people heard that Bapuji was passing by a particular route they would flock to the railway from all sides with sticks in their hands. They would stop the train by pulling the chain whenever and wherever they liked. The result was that our train was very late.

9-8-1947

This time I learnt an excellent lesson as the result of a mistake on my part. We had forgotten to take with us Bapuji's chamber pot. We did not feel the

want of it till we reached Patna. There Abhabahen told Bapu about our oversight and I asked him whether we should purchase a new one. Bapu replied laughingly, "Why not? Your father has deposited your money with me and I have been appointed its trustee. If you decide to purchase a new pot I would not object to it. But I cannot spare even a single pie myself." I could see that this was a joke; but thinking that it would be indispensable for Bapu in Noakhali, I bought one. Bapu came to know of this in the train the next morning. The train was due to reach Calcutta in a short while. Shri Nirmalbabu joined us at Burdwan and Bapu was busy talking with him. As soon as we got down at Calcutta and started for Sodepur in a car, Bapuji opened the topic of my purchase. Both of us had been nervous with fear at the thought of facing Bapu. It was I who was responsible for the mistake, but when Abhabahen saw Bapu become cross with me she plied me with sympathy. Bapu said, "I was merely joking. I would have managed with a glass bottle. Have you any idea as to how seven rupees are earned? You have not earned a single pie. You have today spent seven rupees for my chamber pot, but tomorrow you will be spending money for some useless stuff. Are you going to squander your father's money like this? I appreciate your generosity but you must learn to be practical. There is every chance that others will misunderstand that what you have done has been done through pride. I do not misunderstand. It may be agrued that there is nothing wrong in providing for our bodily comfort by necessary purchases if we can afford the money. This leads man to degradation. I wanted to tell you this at 2 a.m. But I postponed the idea and blamed Bisen.

I am now telling you this so that you may be on your guard henceforth."

I had to listen to Bapu's reproach all the way from Calcutta to Sodepur. Bapu bathed, and then started his interviews.

At Calcutta

Sodepur,
9-8-1947

Dr. Prafulla Ghosh, Satish Dasgupta, Bal Kalelkar and Bhansalibhai came to see Bapuji. Dr. Ghosh had an exclusive interview for an hour. At 3.30 p.m. Bapu went to meet the Governor. On his return, Nirmalbabu read out some letters to him. Later, he had a discussion with Renuka Roy. Prayers were held at 5-30 p.m.

Calcutta was in the grip of communal riots. Bapu was filled with anxiety. He said, "This is the time of our real test. We must show our strength to the whole world. If India is to be enslaved again, I do not wish to live to see it, as my soul will weep at the sight. But I pray to God that such a time does not come."

Bapu took his walk after returning from prayers. He finished his day's work and went to bed at 10 p.m.

Sodepur,
Sunday, 10-8-1947

Washed and attended prayers at 3.30 a.m. Bapuji started his daily work after prayers. This was the only time when he got some peace to write for the *Harijan*.

We started for a walk at 6 a.m., and Abhabahen and I were the only persons who joined him. Bapuji

asked laughingly, "Who is older, Abha or you?"

When Abhabahen replied that she was the older one, Bapu said to her, "In that case you can scold Manu if you want to."

I retorted, "But Bapuji, being Kanubhai's sister I am her sister-in-law, and according to the custom in Kathiawar, even a younger sister-in-law can scold her brother's wife."

Bapu laughed and said, "Yes, that is so; I had clean forgotten it. I too used to harass my sister-in-law although I was younger than she. Brothers' wives always suffer at the hands of their sisters-in-law. But you two should be ideal sisters-in-law."

Immediately after a bath Bapu interviewed visitors as usual. One of them was Usmankhan who was the secretary of some league. He described the terrible situation in Calcutta and, while pressing Bapu to stay there for a couple of days, said, "The Muslims have as much claim on you as the Hindus, for you have yourself accepted that you are as much a Muslim as a Hindu."

Bapu replied, "Are you prepared to guarantee that nothing will happen in Noakhali? If anything happens there I now have the right to go on a fast for Noakhali and you will have to be a witness during the fast."

There were twenty other Muslims who accompanied Usmankhan at the time of the interview, but they did not dare accept such a heavy responsibility. They said that they would wire to Gulam Sarvar, Kasam, and others who had been released, about the matter, and that they would also send special emissaries, but they refused to be witnesses to the fast. Bapu replied that he would, in any case,

prolong his stay by two days. He then fixed the 13th for starting for Noakhali.

Other routine matters, including the evening prayer, went on as usual. Bapu poured out his heart in prayer. He said, "The Hindus should do nothing in Calcutta for which we shall have to feel ashamed. If in our pride we maintain that the Government being ours we can behave in any manner we choose, we shall be the worst of fools, and India's freedom will not last long. If you want to fight, fight like brave men. Why this stabbing in the back? I can speak to you in this strain as I am sure that the Hindus do not think me to be their enemy."

Most of Bapu's visitors today were Muslims. Ministers also came. Bapu started his silence at 7 p.m.

Bapuji's diet consists of milk, vegetables and *chapatis*. He weighed 113 lbs.

Monday, 11-8-1947

After prayers, Bapu wrote letters to Manibahen Patel, P. R. Das, Balkoba, Mehtab, and Chimanlal. He also wrote to the Governor. He started for his morning walk at 6. After massage and bath he listened to newspapers being read aloud to him while he took his meal. At 11 a.m. he rested for half an hour. Kakasaheb came at 11.30. Bapuji talked to him while spinning. At 1 p.m. Prafullababu and Annadababu came. At 2.30 he went to see the damage caused by the riots. He returned at a quarter to five. Then followed a continuous flow of visitors right up to 10 p.m., with a break only for the daily prayer.

At prayer time Bapuji said, "We must make ourselves worthy of the freedom that is to come after

two days. Let us be grateful to God, who has given us the fruit of the sacrifice we have made even in our poverty. How grand it would be if four-hundred millions of people fast on that day and save that much food. Try to understand that there is great strength in fasting, silence and spinning."

Shri Suhrawardy came at 10 p.m. He was with Bapu for nearly an hour and a half. Bapuji said, "We shall both work together. You should join me if you are sincere. Then I do not have to go to Noakhali. This is a path of renunciation. So, you should consult your family before you decide."

In the afternoon Bapu was requested by the B.B.C. to broadcast a three minutes' talk on "Free India and Her Relations with the World", but he refused and said, "I must resist this temptation and these people should forget that I know English."

Bapuji postponed his departure to Noakhāli.

Tuesday, 12-8-1947

Today also Bapuji's routine followed the usual daily course.

In the afternoon, Shri Usman, the ex-Mayor of Calcutta, brought Mr. Suhrawardy's message which was that he and Bapuji should stay together in the same bungalow in the area where Muslims dared not enter. Both should go there with open minds. Neither should have secret interviews. Both should issue joint statements. Both should stay and eat together. Shri Suhrawardy took upon himself to take care of Noakhali.

Bapu launched on a frightening venture, for the locality in which he was asked to stay was thought to be very dangerous. Not a single Muslim had been

spared there. One has to rely on God for the future.

Chief amongst today's visitors were Kakasaheb, Horace Alexander, Stuart, representatives of Chandranagar, Ramesh Chandra Majmudar, Gopinath Roy, Prafullababu, Annadababu, Usman Saheb, and Shri Suhrawardy.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST MIRACLE

15th August at Calcutta

Wednesday, 13-8-1947

Rising and prayers as usual at 3.30 a.m. This was our last day at Sodepur. With the idea of informing people about the sudden change in his programme, Bapu wrote a number of letters addressed, among others, to Kanu Gandhi, Pyarelal, Amtus Salambahen, Satishbabu, Radhakrishna, Aryanayakam, Balvantsinh, Rajendra Babu, Sardar Vallabhbhai, Manibahen and Perinbahen Captain. A small meeting was also held for 'Hindustani'. Bapu was kept busy from the time he got up at 3.30 a.m. till 12-30 p.m., when he decided to rest for a little while. Just then, however, Suhrawardy's group called on him. They remained with him up to 1.30 p.m. Bapuji told Shaheed Saheb that he would leave Sodepur at 2.28 p.m. and they should join him in time. Having waited for Shaheed Saheb till 2.25, Bapu took his seat in the car at 2.28 as per schedule. He drove towards the Haidari Mansion at Beliaghata where the Hindus had massacred all the Muslims.

A few men belonging to Bapu's party went in advance to clean the Haidari Mansion. It was a very

shabby house without any sort of facility. It was open on all sides—thus being easy of access to outsiders. The doors and windows were broken. There was only one latrine which was used by hundreds of people, including a number of volunteers, policemen and visitors. Every inch of the place was covered with dust. In addition, rain had made the passages muddy. Bleaching powder having been profusely sprinkled, the acrid smell caused great discomfort. There was only one usable room where everybody and everything had to be accommodated, including Bapu himself, his luggage and guests.

There had been a riot. The youths were excited. They said to Bapu, "Why have you come here? The slightest suffering on the part of the Muslims has caused you to hasten to their succour. Where were you when we suffered?" But they did not prevent Bapu from entering the house. Shaheed Saheb, who came later on, was stopped at the door. It was feared that he might be killed. Bapu sent Nirmalbabu and others to bring a few representatives of the rioting mobs to meet him. When they came inside, the rest of the mob remained calm. Shri Suhrawardy was then allowed to enter the house.

Bapu had the following conversation with the excited youths who had come inside.

Question: Why was there no one to protect the Hindus in the Muslim locality during last year's riots in Calcutta on the 16th of August? And you have come here to save the Muslims when there is only a small scuffle of four days' duration!

Bapu: There is a vast difference between today and the 16th August, 1946. I accept that all the atrocities of 16th August were perpetrated exclusively

by the Mohammedans. But what is the use of avenging past wrongs? I was on my way to Noakhali. But now I shall manage the affairs of Noakhali from here. I have not come for the good of Muslims alone. I want to serve everybody, for I am a friend of all men. Those who kill and burn prove unfaithful to their own religion. It is you who can save me. And if I am to be killed it is you who can kill me. After all, I am old now. I have very few days to live. I have done a lot of work. I have come to make you understand my point of view if I can. But within my heart I feel that I am the servant of both communities. I am a Bania. I am doing my business. I have warned Hindus of Bihar that a repetition of the former happenings would cost me my life. In coming here I have obtained the permission to say that they (Muslims) will have to murder me first before they start a riot in Noakhali. Why don't you try to understand that my responsibility concerning Noakhali is now being shouldered by Shaheed Saheb and his men, and persons like Gulam Sarvar? Is this small matter? This is what I call my business.

The youths (greatly excited): We do not want to take lessons in Himsa and Ahimsa from you. Better leave this place. We shall never allow any Muslim to come here.

Bapu: This means that you do not want my interference. But if you help me and allow me to do my work, you will find a new situation wherein Hindus will be able to go safely where they cannot go today. What do you gain by harping on the events of August 16th, 1946, and becoming permanent enemies?

To this, an eighteen year old boy replied: "History has not proved that two widely differing

communities have been able to exist amicably, side by side. I have noticed since childhood that the Hindus and Muslims have always been fighting."

Bapu: You are not older than I. I have seen a number of instances where Hindu boys called Musalmans by the fond term, *chacha.** Persons of both communities participate in each other's auspicious ceremonies and carry on friendly business and social dealings. Besides, you want to force me to leave this place. I never submit to force of any kind whatsoever! It is not in my nature. You can stop me doing my work. You can imprison me if you like, or kill me. I shall not call in the help of the military or pray to be spared. You say that I am an enemy of the Hindus, but this does not affect me as long as my soul is witness to my worthy motives. How can I then accept that I am the enemy of Hindus? If you can convince me that I have made a mistake in coming here, I shall immediately leave this place.

This went on up to 8 p.m. In the end, Bapu said to two of the boys, "Can't you understand that being a Hindu by religion, deed and name, I cannot possibly be an enemy of my own community? This is sheer narrow-mindedness on your part."

One does not know how, but the utterance of these two sentences had a magic effect and all the young boys were satisfied. Then, the same youths volunteered to keep watch over Bapu throughout the night. They said, "God knows, the old man is a wizard; everybody is won over by him. He is never vanquished."

Prayers were held inside the house at 9 p.m. Bapu was extremely tired, and so were we. Abha and

*Uncle.

I were very hungry as well, but there was nothing to eat. Bapu said that we should not eat anything at so late an hour. But hunger got the better of us and we ate something at 10 p.m.

Bapu retired at 11 p.m. We had fixed up an old four-legged charpoy for him, and spread our own bedding on the floor. Bapu said, "How can I sleep on a bed, while you sleep on the floor? Spread my bedding also on the floor." We therefore spread his bedding too on the floor. Shri Suhrawardy decided that he would not sleep here tonight. He had some work to do. He said he would join us from the following night.

Some of the Sodepur people wanted to stay on to help Bapu. He refused, saying that the greatest help they could render was to carry out their duties in their own place properly. Bapu had not eaten anything since 1 p.m., nor had he taken any rest. He went to sleep at 11.30 p.m.

Haidari Mansion, Beliaghata,
Thursday, 14-8-1947

Bapu wrote some letters after prayer at 3.30 a.m. He drank hot water mixed with honey. At 5.30 a.m. he took sweet lemon juice. He started for his walk at 6 a.m. Since there was no space inside the compound he walked along the public road. After his walk he had a massage. Then he had an hour's talk with Shri Kripalani who had come to meet him. This was followed by a stream of visitors including Renuka Roy, Surendra Mohan Ghosh, Tushar Kanti Ghosh, members of the Peace Committee and others. Among the visitors were some who were still greatly excited. All this kept Bapu busy up to 3 p.m. He

then tried to relax and rest for a while, but could not sleep owing to the continuous influx of visitors who were noisy. The youths allowed Bapuji to attend the prayer meeting. He went there at 5.30 p.m. More than ten thousand people had assembled. They were fairly quiet and reasonably well-behaved during prayers. Bapu made his after-prayer speech with an apology for not being able to talk in Bengali. He said:

"Tomorrow we shall be free from the slavery of the British domination. But at midnight India will be partitioned. Tomorrow will thus be a day of rejoicing as well as of mourning. With the advent of freedom, we shall have to shoulder a very heavy burden. Let us pray to God to give us the strength to bear this heavy burden.

"I decided to stay on here as Shri Suhrawardy told me that there was a big conflagration in Calcutta which I should try to extinguish. I told him that he would be required to become a recluse like me. He accepted the condition and I stayed on. If, after achieving freedom, we become blind with pride and say, 'Now that we have our own government, let us kill the Musalmans', I would not reckon it as bravery on our part. To me, all religions are equally good. I merely laugh when I hear Hindu boys tell me that I am their enemy. What can I gain by being wroth with these boys? Shri Suhrawardy asked me whether he should join the prayers. I prevented him, as I felt that he might be insulted by someone and that would be like insulting me. All the Musalmans who have run away from this locality must return. If the two millions, comprising the two communities, became enemies, how can I persuade the Noakhali Hindus?

If communal strife spreads over the whole of India, of what use is our freedom? Let us, therefore, pray to God that He may guide us along the right path."

After prayers, everybody asked about the whereabouts of Suhrawardy. They declared that they would not leave the place unless they saw Suhrawardy in person. Shri Suhrawardy was breaking his fast in termination of the *Roza*.* Bapu explained to the people, "He will come within a short time. He will be able to stand here with me if he is sincere in his heart. I am sure that he will not be able to join forces with me, and keep it up even for a day if he is a hypocrite."

Shri Suhrawardy arrived just then. He said, "It is really our good luck that Mahatmaji had come to Bengal. But you have to understand the importance of his visit. A great man like Gandhiji has blessed your land with his presence. Let us stop our fighting at least for his sake. We all want peace. We want to prove that Hindus and Musalmans can live side by side in a peaceful manner. If the Hindus of this locality guarantee that not a single Muslim will lose his life, I assure you that Hindus too will be able to go where they cannot dare go now."

Someone asked, "Don't you think that you were responsible for the great massacre of 16th August 1946?" Shri Suhrawardy replied, "All of us were responsible for it." The youth said, "Please answer my question." Shri Suhrawardy finally admitted that he alone was responsible for the happenings and people greeted him with cheers.

It was 8 p.m. by now. News was received that five thousand Hindus and five thousand Mohammedans

*A Mohammedan fast.

had started in processions and they had greeted each other. It was Shri Suhrawardy who broke this news and added, "What a wonderful result of only one day's penance on the part of the Mahatma! The entire city is as peaceful as if nothing had happened. Shrimati Aruna Asafali and Ram Manohar Lohia have to be congratulated for what they have done in this respect.

At 9 p.m. Shri Suhrawardy took Bapu for a drive to the lake. From there they went to the Marwadi Club. It took an hour by car to reach and to return home. On the return journey Bapu was perturbed. He protested, "I spend only half an hour in walking, and I have wasted an hour in a car to reach the place and return. How can I afford to waste time like this? It is bad business. It is past ten now. When will the girls eat?"

Shri Suhrawardy replied, "It is not very late; it is just ten o'clock."

Bapu then said, "It may be early for you, but for me it is like midnight."

We returned home at 10.45 p.m. and Bapu retired at 11. He was worried because we remained hungry till so late.

People disturbed us throughout the night. They kept coming in great numbers as the following day was the 15th of August. The whole city was being decorated with flags and the noise of the bustle reached our ears from all sides.

Friday, 15-8-1947

Today Bapuji got up at 2 a.m. A number of Musalmans, who had decided to break their *Roza* only after obtaining *darshan* from the Father of the

Nation who had brought freedom, were waiting outside. There were Hindus also. Bapuji went out to meet them. Today being the death anniversary of Shri Mahadevbhai, we recited the *Bhagawadgita* at the time of the prayer. The recitation was completed at 3.45 a.m. From early morning Hindus and Muslims were going round the city sitting together in trucks with both the Muslim League and Congress flags flying and shouting "Long Live Hindu-Muslim Unity". What a contrast this was to that of two days previously. How wonderful the result of penance!! Bapu looked more serious today. When we went out for a walk on the street in the morning, we saw thousands of men, women and children assembled for Bapu's *darshan.* We returned home at 8 o'clock. I said, "Bapuji, people will celebrate in a different manner, while you ask us to observe fasting and silence and to spin yarn. Is not today a day of rejoicing?"

Bapu replied, "Let people do what they want. You know that I ask people to observe a fast even on occasions of marriage and child-birth. Today we have to consider with a calm mind how far our responsibility has increased. It is the Charkha which has given us freedom. How can we forget it? And when we fast we purify our bodies. Thus purified, we should pray to God that He may make us fit for freedom."

Bapu could not do any work today. He had to go out every half an hour. Thousands of people kept coming for his *darshan*, and they said that all this was due to the great Gandhi!

The Ministers of Calcutta came to pay their respects to Bapu. Bapu said to them, "Today, you have worn on your head a crown of thorns. The

seat of power is a nasty thing. You have to remain ever wakeful on that seat. You have to be more truthful, more non-violent, more humble and more forebearing. You had been put to test during the British regime. But in a way it was no test at all. But now there will be no end to your being tested. Do not fall a prey to the lure of wealth. May God help you! You are there to serve the villages and the poor."

The atmosphere of Calcutta had changed in two hours. Men and women were seen going round hand in hand, shouting, "Hindu-Muslim Bhai Bhai."*

Bapuji allowed us to witness the celebrations, but he himself did not go. People of both communities visited each other's places of worship.

There was a terrible rush at the evening prayer at 5.30 p.m. Bapu's car passed through the crowd with great difficulty, and he encountered still greater difficulty in reaching the dais. In his after-prayer speech Bapu said:

> "Today is the first day of freedom and Rajaji has become the Governor.† People thought that the Governor's house was their own property and so they occupied the whole of it. It is a good thing that the people are aware that all have equal right to enter the house. But it is painful that they seem to think that now that the British have gone away, they are free to do what they like and break and destroy things. I hope no one will indulge in such barbarism. If we can show the same degree of unity which

*The slogan means Hindus and Muslims are brothers.

†The Governor of Bengal.

we had shown during the days of the Khilafat agitation, we shall be drinking cups of nectar in place of those of poison which we had to drink uptill now."

This was followed by a speech by Shri Suhrawardy. He said:

"If there is no peace in Calcutta, there can be no peace anywhere in India. As Mahatmaji has told you, if we both can work peacefully, with honesty of purpose, we shall be able to achieve a lot; you have seen the result achieved in twenty-four hours. Hindus and Muslims are moving about hand in hand. This is due to the effort of the great Mahatma and the grace of Allah and the mercy of Ishwar!

"We are starting a new life from today. If we fight amongst ourselves, we shall be unfit for freedom. I pray to God that our country should be foremost among the countries of the world, and that it should be absolutely free from poverty and helplessness."

While referring to 'Jai Hind', he said:

"Muslims are being forced to shout the slogan: 'Jai Hind', but there is no need for any force. We shall also shout that slogan of our own free will, for we too are residents of India."

With these words he made the people shout 'Jai Hind' and the whole meeting resounded with it. Bapu's face was wreathed in a tender smile.

We returned from prayers at 8 p.m. Bapu met Prafullababu and yielded to Shri Suhrawardy's pressure to go for a drive. He wanted to show Bapuji the illuminations and the atmosphere of unity in the city. Everyone recognized Bapu's car. When it passed

through a Muslim locality it was surrounded by people who greeted him with 'Jai Hind'. Small children shook hands with him, and many a people sprinkled him with scents and rose water.

Bapu returned from a drive around the city at a quarter to ten. He was extremely tired. After doing some work, he went to bed at 10-30 p.m.

CHAPTER IV

'HINDU-MUSLIM BHAI BHAI'

Haidari Mansion, Beliaghata,
Saturday, 16-8-1947

We got through our morning wash, and had prayers as usual at 3.30 a.m. Then, Bapu read his post and gave replies. We started for a walk on the street at 6.30 a.m.

Even his walk served the purpose of imparting some practical lessons to our people. Thousands had assembled to obtain his *darshan* before he set off. Bapu made them sit down in front of the door and explained to them that the great noise they made was unbearable. This made them silent. Bapu had started out for his walk with bare feet. He thought that those people who made the streets dirty by spitting everywhere would stop doing so if he went out unshod. It certainly had some effect as people stopped making the streets quite as dirty as formerly. Bapu remarked, "I am glad that people have learnt these two lessons from me."

Bapu took his massage after the walk; this was followed by a bath and his morning meal at 9 a.m. as usual.

The most important person to meet Bapu today was Rajaji. The first thing he did after being sworn-in as the Governor was to come to Bapu for an interview at 11.30 a.m. Formerly, it was Bapu who had to go to the Governor! It made history as it was the first time that a Governor had come to interview Bapu! Both the old men looked very happy. In spite of the dirtiness of the yard, Rajaji had removed his slippers outside, and had crossed the verandah etc. with bare feet to enter Bapu's room. All the visitors came with shoes on right up to Bapu's room. But not so Rajaji. He remained with Bapu for nearly an hour.

There was a series of deputations to meet Bapu between 12.30 and 5 p.m. There were discussions about communal unity and relief work. Bapu went to the prayer meeting at 5.30 p.m. Shaheed Saheb was the first to speak. He said, "We have to thank Allah or Ishwar and the great Mahatma for the peace we have had here for the last two or three days. The terrible riots have been replaced by perfect peace. Even women go out freely and without fear. It is now our responsibility to maintain this calm atmosphere. People of both communities must unite in service to our country. Muslims have to take a vow that they will not kill a single Hindu henceforth, and will carry on business as partners with Hindus. India does not belong to Hindus alone; she belongs to all of us. 'Jai Hind' should be the slogan for everybody. All our sins are being washed away by the efforts of the Mahatma. Our only aim now should be the happiness of the poor."

This was followed by Bapu's speech. He too appealed for unity and said that if permanent peace

could be established there, it would have its effect all over India. Some people had stolen things from Government House. Referring to this he said, "It is said about our country that there was no need in olden times to lock anything or any house. There were no thefts committed in *Ramarajya*. We were such an honest people in those days. Such incidents are a matter of shame to our great country. I would request those who have stolen that they should return the stolen articles."

Bapu took his usual walk after prayers. Shri Kailasji of the Scottish Church College came to meet him and asked, "What is the relation between a nation and religion?"

Bapu replied, "A nation does not belong to any particular religion or sect. It should be absolutely independent of either religion or sect. Every person should be free to follow the religion of his choice."

Bapu went to bed at 10.30 p.m.

17-8-1947

The morning programme was gone through as usual, after which Bapu spent his time in meeting workers, advising people, and writing articles for the *Harijan*, this being the last day for dispatching the matter. Shri Suhrawardy was the first to speek at the prayer meeting which was held today at Nankudanga. It was a vast assemblage of people. Shaheed Saheb said: "During the riots Hindus and Musalmans could not pass through each other's localities even in motor vehicles. But, today, even a small child can walk without fear wherever it likes. Remember that we owe all this to Gandhiji." He appealed to everybody to preserve communal unity.

Bapu followed this with his speech and said, "Every one is congratulating me; but what can a frail ordinary man like myself achieve by himself? We must not be proud. Though it is very gratifying to hear Hindus shout, 'Long live Pakistan' and Muslims, 'Long live Hindustan'. Yet, people should not shout these slogans merely in order to please me, or through fear. They should do so sincerely with God as witness."

He then appealed for unity. He also referred to the Chandranagar Satyagraha. He said, "If every individual resorts to Satyagraha of this variety, there is no purpose in selecting Jawaharlal as your Prime Minister. There is a specific code of rules even for carrying out Satyagraha."

Referring to his place of residence Bapuji said, "People now seem to think that they are not bound to obey any one's orders. People who visit my place of residence indulge in shouting and abusing the police. The latter fold their hands in return. The police are no doubt our servants, but they receive orders only from the Government, not from private individuals. If each one of us start to order the police they will be crushed. If we continue to behave in this unruly manner, we shall surely lose our freedom. You are free to complain if the police try to rule instead of serving. But it is their duty to arrest all those who commit crimes. I have, therefore, requested the Government to withdraw the police force. It is really painful that they should have to listen to your abuse for our sake. Now it is in your hands to kill us or save us. I do not deny your love for me. But I am afraid it may prove to be merely an effervescence similar to that of a soda water bottle. All things are good within their proper limits."

The prayer grounds were covered with mud. Shri Suhrawardy was carried to the car, but Bapu walked. His legs were covered with the mud by the time he reached the car. We got back from the prayer meeting at 9 p.m. Bapu went to bed at 10 p.m. after an hour's discussion with Shri Suhrawardy.

Monday, 18-8-1947

Today is Bapu's day of silence. At 6.30 he busied himself with writing work after the morning prayer. Then he went out for a walk. There was less noise today. The military had been sent away. Volunteers are very helpful. Bapu started for Barakpur at 11 a.m. and got there at 12 noon. There was a big crowd shouting 'Jai Hind'. It was deafening. There had been some quarrel about a procession at Barakpur; it was now amicably settled, and people of both communities greeted each other cordially. Bapu gave Id greetings and at about 1.30 p.m. gave his message in writing.

One of the Muslim friends said, "Kindly excuse our mistakes which have been too many to recount. But we want to live as brothers henceforth." This was followed by people of both communities embracing each other.

Shaheed Saheb said, "The first thing we should now do is to resolve never to fight amongst ourselves again. We should visit each other's houses; eat and drink together, hoist our flags together and forget the past. Unfortunately, there were incidents at Barakpur for two days, but we now want to follow the example of Calcutta."

The Musalmans wished that Bapu would concede the request of Muslim ladies to obtain his *darshan*. Bapu readily agreed. A Hindu said, "We shall not grieve the Muslims by playing music in front of their mosques."

Bapu's written message was as follows:

> "I hope that the understanding arrived at is accepted by all — not only by those who are present here today but also by those who are absent. Hindus must understand that music should not be played before a Masjid at the time of prayer. All of you should speak out your minds plainly. The League and the Congress have come to an agreement that if they cannot settle any issue they will get it settled through arbitration. Neither group shall use force. If we continue to fight in fits of anger we shall never be able to live in peace."

Muslim women who resided in the market area were waiting for Bapu's *darshan*. So, our motor passed through that locality.

We returned to Beliaghata at 4 p.m. Bapu did his spinning and drank milk. He then went to the prayer meeting. Today being Id, Musalmans called on Bapu in great numbers and he gave each of them some fruit.

The prayer was held at the 'Mohammedan Sports' *maidan*. There was an assemblage of four to five lakh people. Bapu reached the pulpit with great difficulty. He nearly slipped twice on his way. His face expressed joy when he saw the mammoth gathering of Hindus and Muslims. Our car took half an hour to pass through the gate; ordinarily this would have required only a couple of minutes. People were

eager to touch Bapu's feet. Poor Shaheed Saheb was wet with perspiration. His wrist watch was broken to pieces. He made his speech as usual. He said, "Id is usually a day of joy for Musalmans. But today it is much more so, for it is for the first time, after nearly a year of fighting, that Hindus and Muslims — not only men but women also — have been able to sit together without any fear. All this is due to the infinite mercy of Allah and the good work of our beloved Bapu."

Usman Saheb, the Mayor of Calcutta, then said, "Today is a golden day in our history. We have been able to witness a similar sight to that which we had seen in 1920-21. All our quarrels have now ended. I was terribly anxious when India was on the threshold of freedom; I was at a loss to know what was going to happen. But by the grace of Allah and Gandhiji all our differences were settled just half an hour before we became free. Our effort now should be to preserve our freedom. In order to do this, we must prepare for still greater sacrifice than was called for during our fight to obtain Independence."

Bapu spoke: "It is my foremost duty to extend Id greetings to all the Muslim brethren here. There was a time when both communities met to offer Id greetings; but I must admit that I am witnessing such a sight today for the first time after a good many years. My heart leaps with joy when I see here volunteers of the Muslim League, the National Guard and the Congress working together. We have to make this unity a lasting one. Now we have, ourselves, to do the work which the English had been doing for us. I shall never forget what I have seen here today."

Bapu made his way to the car with great difficulty as he had to pass through the surging crowd. On the way home, he talked to us about the Khilafat days. He said, "Khilafat was the effort to preserve the seat of the Khalifa. The Ali Brothers helped a lot in those days. The Khilafat struggle went on for a number of years. There were many small disturbances for which I had to undertake a fast in the year 1921. I remember those days today. The Ali Brothers did not fully approve of a statement which I issued at that time. This resulted in slight disharmony." Bapu took some fruit and milk after returning from prayers. He started for a walk at 9.45 p.m. He told the noisy crowds outside, "If you persist in making so much noise, you will kill me. But I do not want to die in this way. You should, therefore, behave in a befitting manner."

Bapuji went to bed at 10.30 p.m.

CHAPTER V

THE PEACE WEEK

Beliaghata,
Tuesday, 19-8-1947

Prayer as usual at 3.30 a.m. Having finished his morning functions Bapu began his routine work. The first to meet him was Shaheed Saheb. He stayed for an hour. Then came the Bengal Ministers.

We started for Kacharapada at 12 o'clock and reached there at 2 p.m. It was with great difficulty that the crowds were persuaded to preserve silence. The Muslims of this place complained that the Hindus were harassing them. The population consisted of twenty-five thousand Hindus and eight

thousand Muslims. Most of the Hindus are Biharis. Addressing the meeting Bapu said, "I have built Bihar and served her. Hence, the Biharis respect my word. Are they going mad today? And those who form a majority of the population must be very careful." Shri Suhrawardy said, "This tri-colour flag is the greatest thing. Be you Hindu or Muslim, it is the only flag you can fly." He also laid great emphasis on unity.

At last the two communities agreed to unite, and the crowd started out in a joint procession with the National Flag.

We left the place at 3.30 p.m. and drove homewards. But our car was stopped at different places on the way and we did not reach the prayer meeting till 7 p.m., which was very late.

Bapu expressed the same views at the prayer meeting as he had done at the Kacharapada meeting. He added, "The custom of not playing music in front of Masjids was introduced during the British regime. We must stick to the same custom until Jawahar or Liaqat Ali introduces some other custom. We should, therefore, stop playing music before Masjids if the Muslims feel offended by it."

After returning from prayers at 9 p.m. Bapu did his spinning and drank milk. He went to bed at 11 p.m.

20-8-1947

The morning programme took its usual course from 3.30 a.m. Interviews started immediately after Bapu's bath. Rajaji came at 11.30 a.m. Bapu had an hour's talk with him. There was a Press conference at 3.30 p.m.

Someone asked, "It is rumoured that Shrimati Chandralekha Pandit* is to be sent as ambassador to the U.S.A. What can a girl of eighteen do as ambassador?"

Bapu replied, "This question is an attack on Jawahar. I can give a fitting reply, but I do not want to enter into political questions now. I am at the moment concerned with Hindu-Muslim problem; you may ask me any question relating to it. I do not wish the Press to be ineffective. I want it to help the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. I request you to create an atmosphere in which the people of the two communities do not indulge in stabbing each other, even though the Governments of Pakistan and Hindustan go mad. I am very eager for the creation of such an atmosphere. All my speeches at prayer meetings, and also my writings, are always made after full deliberation." Bapu spoke in this strain for half an hour. He took fruit and milk after returning from the Press conference. It was now time to attend the prayer meeting which was to be held in the open area surrounded by Canning Street, Pollock Street, Muraghihata and Kolutola. Bapu was so seated that he had a Temple on one side, a Masjid on another and a Church on the third side.

It was at this place that the rioting had started on 16th August 1946 and it was here also that Hindu-Muslim unity had been established on 15th August 1947. There was a vast gathering. According to local calculation there were not less than seven lakh people. There was a great noise. When the prayer was

*The daughter of Vijayalakshmi Pandit.

concluded with the recitation of *Ramanama* the people indulged in clapping. Bapu reprimanded them and said, "The prayer is neither a dramatic performance nor a cinema show; nor is it an exhibition. It is a means of remembering God. You should therefore never clap at prayer time."

He added later on, "I now wish to go to Noakhali. I offer you my heartiest congratulations for the unity you have achieved here. Yet, I do not want you to lapse into relaxation. You all must remain alert and spread the atmosphere of peace everywhere by starting peace committees in different areas."

Speaking about the flag he said, "True Hindu as I am, I would fly both the flags, for we have become friends now. It matters little if Pakistan does not fly the Union Flag. That would put her to shame. Look at the U.S.A. and Great Britain. They are friends and they fly their flags jointly and observe joint celebrations. We should not always be guided by what others do. If we do what we think to be right, it is sure to have its effect." Regarding cow protection he said, "There is no greater admirer of the cow than I am. Newspapers report Shri Dalmia to have said that the Union Government could stop beef-eating by legislation. But it cannot do so. It is a lesser sin to kill a cow and eat her than to ill-treat and under-feed her as we are doing; I would even go to the length of saying that the former course may prove to be the more merciful. If, instead of passing a law to stop cow slaughter, we learn the method of cow breeding, we shall see that cow slaughter will stop of its own accord."

Shri Suhrawardy also spoke. He laid great emphasis on unity. He advised the Muslims to fly the

Congress Flag. He concluded by saying, "This is the place where massacring took place and it is here that the slogan: "Hindu-Muslim Bhai Bhai" was first proclaimed. It is here too that that great peace maker, apostle of love, and humanitarian, the great Mahatma Gandhi, has arrived today among this vast congregation of Hindus and Muslims. This place shall ever remain a great monument." We returned from the prayer at 9 p.m. Bapu had a long discussion with the Bengal Ministers. He started for his walk at ten o'clock and went to bed at 10.30 p.m.

A phone message from Mridulabahen stated that the Calcutta happenings had had a salutary effect on Bihar. Bapu was greatly pleased to hear this.

Haidari Mansion,
21-8-1947

The day's programme started as usual at 3.30 a.m. As it was raining, the morning walk had to be cancelled. Massage, bath, meal etc. were taken today in comparative peace. There were fewer visitors.

Bapu spent his time in writing articles for the *Harijan* and in attending to his daily correspondence. It was only today—for the first time after our coming here—that Bapu could work undisturbed till 3. p.m.

At 3 o'clock Bapu went to the women's meeting at the University. There was too much noise. Bapu waited for three quarters of an hour, but all attempts to induce silence failed. He then started to speak: "I have attended many women's meetings, but today there has been too much noise. I am a mere servant. I was ordered to attend a women's meeting and so have I come. I want to go back as early as I can.

The women who are present here today should befriend Muslim women. Ladies can achieve a lot. My grand-daughter accompanied me on my Noakhali tour. I used to send her daily to meet women; they told her so many things, and also tested her in numerous ways. I advise ladies to help in removing untouchability."

From here we went straight on to the prayer meeting at Park Circus. Shri Suhrawardy was the first to speak after prayers. After his usual appeal for unity he said, "Hindus as well as Muslims must now return to the homes they left during the disturbances. The two communities have to protect each other. The Muslims have the same rights as the Hindus. They should be prepared to sacrifice their lives to save their Hindu brethren if the latter are in difficulty. Then only shall they be reckoned Muslims of the true faith. One of the Mahatma's volunteers has sent us word that the unity achieved in Calcutta has had a good effect in Bihar. Its effects have also been felt in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Punjab, and other places in the Indian Union. We should be careful, therefore, to see that we do not lose our good name. We must create the type of atmosphere which will induce people to return to their homes without fear. The world too should forget that anything untoward happened in Calcutta. Victory to Hindus and Muslims! Jai Hind!!"

The people responded by shouting 'Jai Hind'.

A Hindu boy holding Pakistan's flag and a Muslim boy holding Hindustan's flag stood side by side. Bapu, referring to this, said, "If our hearts stand united as are these two flags here, who would bother as to which flag is greater and which is smaller? If

Pakistan and Hindustan work in the right spirit, they will be as closely united as if they were two bodies with a single soul." Bapu then appealed for permanent unity and requested people to return to their deserted homes without fear.

After returning from prayers at 9 p.m. Bapu had an hour's discussion with Shri Suhrawardy, then took a walk at the late hour of 9.45. He went to bed at 11 p.m.

22-8-1947

We got up today at 3.15 a.m., it being the 22nd—the date on which Kasturba expired. We recited the *Bhagawadgita* after prayers. This took an hour and twenty minutes. The day's usual programme followed prayers. Bapu had his massage and bath and then discussed important matters with the Bengal Ministers who met him at 10 a.m. While doing this he also had his meal. The Ministers left at 12 noon. This was followed by a discussion with the workers of the Bengal Chemicals who wanted to go on a strike. Bapu advised them not to strike.

He attended a women's meeting of the Kasturba Trust at 2 p.m.

The ladies offered Bapu hanks of hand-spun yarn as garlands. Bapu said, "Those of you who know weaving may take this yarn."

One of the workers asked, "How do we go about organizing village work? Different people suggest different methods, and we are confused and do not know which is best."

Bapu said, "Practice makes one perfect. Go and settle in a village. There is nothing to worry about if you wish to devote yourself to the service of others. If

you have overcome your fear, go straight to some village and gather round you children below the age of five. Start educating them. Clean the village streets with their help. The village should look after such women workers. If not, they should be ready to go hungry. But maintaining you does not mean money for make-up and fashionable clothes. It means your food, which should be only bread and *dal*—things which the farmer usually eats. The village is sure to accept you in its fold if you make yourself a part of it.

Sister: Some sisters have been working in a village for the last year and a half. They are doing cleaning and other work. But no worthwhile result is to be seen.

Bapu: The villages have not received proper training. You must show zeal for honest and patient work.

Sister: But people say that we have been forcing ourselves on villages as we have no other means of livelihood.

Bapu: Does it matter even if you have to live in one particular village all your life and listen to the abuse of its inhabitants? You should bear with it. We must now expiate the grave injustice we have done to villages. Premabahen Kantak has stuck to just one village for a number of years. So has Yashodhara in a village of Mysore. Results will be seen only after you have worked for years together.

This discussion went on up to 4 p.m. Bapuji then started spinning. He talked to visitors while doing so. The prayer meeting was held at Deshbandhu Park at 5 p.m. Shri Suhrawardy once again

appealed for unity and exhorted Muslims to work under the tri-colour flag. He appealed to the people to contribute to the Relief Fund.

Bapu asked the audience to join in repeating *Ramanama* and to clap to its rhythm. He said, "That will give us new strength. How nice it looks when soldiers march in step! I am opposed to military power, for it results in killing human beings. There is only one way to vanquish military power and obtain peace, and it is this."

Bapu then expressed his intense feelings regarding communal unity, with special reference to the riots in the Punjab.

We returned home at 7 p.m. Bapu took some fruit and milk and then had a short talk with the Ministers of Bengal. After this, he went for an evening walk and retired at 10 p.m.

Haidari Mansion, Beliaghata,
23-8-1947

Got up at 3.30 a.m. as usual. Bapu wrote some letters after morning prayers. We then started for a walk. Bapu said, "I like walking outside with bare feet. It reminds me of the Noakhali pilgrimage." After the walk Bapu had his massage and bath, and wrote for the *Harijan*. He observed silence while writing with the purpose of being able to work undisturbed. Except for an interval of half an hour for eating and an equal time for rest, he worked up to 2 p.m.

Interviews started at 2 p.m. Abhabahen and I left for the Harijan quarters at 2 p.m. The people there wanted Bapuji to visit the colony. He told us to keep an eye on the time and see how long it took

us to walk to the place. We found that the houses of Harijans were clean. Bapu's interviews lasted up to 5. The interviewers were mostly workers.

The prayer meeting was held at "Woodlands" —the residence of the Maharaja of Kuchbihar.

Bapu spoke on communal unity and added; "Hindus should not object to the shouting of 'Allah-ho-Akbar', nor should the Muslims object to 'Vande Mataram'. The two slogans are, however, somewhat different. One of them is political and the other religious. 'Allah-ho-Akbar' means 'God is great'. What does it matter if the slogan is in Arabic? Is it sinful because it is in a foreign language? And 'Vande Mataram' means, a bow to our beloved Mother India. Is anything wrong in this? But these days our minds are much confused. If your hearts are one, I suggest that Musalmans should be free to worship Mother Kali, and Hindus should go to the Masjid with equal freedom."

Referring to Shaheed Saheb, he said: "People tell me that Shaheed Saheb will deceive me. But one who deceives is the loser. If he deceives me he will lose, not I. God does not tolerate such deception. I have not yet complete trust in him. I shall tell you myself when I have. He has been sleeping here for the last two days. Abha and Manu, who are staying with me, asked him why he did not remain with me at night in spite of his promise to do so. The girls meant it as a joke but he took it seriously and started sleeping here. If a man who is a habitual thief comes and tells us that we should trust him and that he would commit no more theft it is our duty to trust him. I am a man who desires to trust others."

Bapu took his meal of milk and fruit after prayers. He went through pending letters and wrote replies to necessary ones. He went out for a walk at 9.30 and slept at 10 p.m.

Haidari Mansion, Beliaghata,
24-8-1947

After prayers at 3.30 a.m. Bapuji wrote for the *Harijan*. He did not go out for a walk as it was raining. He requested the readers to express their opinion as to whether the *Harijan* should be continued or discontinued. He took his walk indoors. There was no space for all of us to walk together. I sat on a wooden seat while he walked. Bapu asked me, "Why are you idle today?"

I said, "What do you mean, Bapu?" He asked, "Why are you not walking? Are you going to sit in a chair after I leave? I can judge others from your case, for you have been with me in this Great Sacrifice. The Sacrifice that was started at Noakhali has not ended because we have left the place. You may have your own reasons for avoiding a walk, but how can you break your own rule? There is no meaning in doing things for fear of my displeasure. Am I to suppose that other workers too are working because of fear of me? What I see of you today makes me afraid that all my workers will occupy chairs!"

I understood Bapu's agony. Many times he attached high importance to very small matters.

Bapuji was having his bath while Shrimati Jyotika Ray sang her sweet devotional songs outside his bathroom. He was highly pleased. How precious was time for him! He could not spare special time to hear her sing, so he requested her to do so while he bathed. He could hear her well.

It was ten in the morning. Someone had phoned the Home Minister, Annada Babu, that Bapu had been shot. He ran to us, scared. He told Bapu about it. He laughed, amused, and said, "Whence can I have the rare fortune of being killed with a bullet?"

Prayers were held at the Monument at 5 p.m. Prior to prayers, Bapu was presented with an Address in a silver casket. He immediately auctioned the casket for the Harijan Fund.

Shaheed Saheb spoke in English today. He said, "May Bapu live long amidst us. There is not the slightest doubt that he is a great man. The flag with the wheel is the flag for us all. The responsibility of making our country worthy of the great man lies on our shoulders." He also spoke about lasting communal unity. Referring to the Address, Bapu said, "Shaheed Saheb requested me to accept the Address. There is no reason why I should refuse it. I am a greedy man who would go miles to obtain even a pie for the Harijan Fund."

Later, referring to the municipality he said, "I wish Calcutta to be the foremost city in cleanliness, and its death-rate to be the lowest. I would like Calcutta to be as beautiful as Buckingham."

Coming to the question of communal unity he said, "All this can be achieved if we achieve real unity."

After prayers Bapu started his silence. He went to bed at 9 p.m. It was the first time after his arrival at Calcutta that he was able to retire early.

CHAPTER VI

THREATENING CLOUDS

Haidari Mansion, Beliaghata,
25-8-1947

Having looked into some correspondence after the morning prayer Bapuji slept for a while. It was raining and he had to walk inside the house. Visitors started coming after massage and bath. But Bapu was observing silence. He wrote a good many letters and slept for an hour in the afternoon. This was real rest after much fatigue. He went to the prayer meeting at Howrah Maidan at 5 p.m. Shaheed Saheb in his speech laid emphasis on communal unity and said, "I have no doubt in my mind, that if it had not been for Bapu's presence here, Howrah would have been burnt to ashes. Let no one feel excited over the happenings in the Punjab. If you preserve peace here, Punjab will revert to peace of its own accord. Mahatmaji has sanctified our atmosphere. May Allah preserve this sanctity. 'Jai Hind'."

Having discussed communal unity, Bapu said, "A few persons from the Punjab came to me and told me that Jawaharlal had gone there. They pressed me also to go there. I told them that I would go only when I would feel like doing it, completing my work here. I have served the Punjab well. I do not belong to Gujarat alone but to each and every province. Even from here I am rendering service to the Punjab. I do want to go there, but I cannot say when. As soon as I finish my work here, I want to go once again to Noakhali. If Hindus and Muslims do

not unite, we cannot steer our vessel to its ultimate destination.

"A Muslim friend told me that Hindus and Muslims cannot be one, for whereas the Muslims believe in one God only, the Hindus worship trees, stones and animals. If this is so, it is a still better argument in favour of unity, for all these have been created by God and hence we worship them. Particles are mixed with particles. God is only one. His creation is manifold. What I have been able to achieve in my old age you should try to stabilise."

The people were standing in silence in pouring rain to hear Bapu. He asked their pardon and said, "That you have chosen to stand in such heavy rains shows the intensity of your regard for me. I feel ashamed of sitting in comfort whilst you are being drenched. I am convinced that true love never harms any one. I request you to kindly forgive me."

Bapu did his spinning after returning from the prayer meeting. He discussed the Punjab situation with some Muslim leaders. He took his walk at ten and went to bed at 10-30 p.m.

Haidari Mansion,
26-8-1947

Last night Bapu did not sleep properly. He woke at 1 o'clock and put on the light. This woke me up. Bapuji asked me to go to sleep and himself started dealing with arrears of work. He worked up to 1.30 a.m. and then lay down. I pressed his legs, back and head. Bapu said, "I am very much dejected. How can I convince others if I cannot convince my own people? But one who has dedicated his all to God should not worry. This shows that

perhaps I have not got complete faith in God. If I can develop that faith, if I can be '*sthitapradna**, I shall simply dance with joy. I have been striving for it but it demands patience."

Bapuji slept at 2. a.m. and woke up again at 3.30 a.m. for prayers. He did not sleep again after prayers but started to work. He went for a walk to the Harijan Colony. Having returned from there at 8.30 he took massage and bath. Interviews started at 9.45. Shri Kakasaheb was the first and he had nearly an hour's talk with Bapu during the latter's meal. Bapu then relaxed awhile. As he had no sleep last night he slept from 12 noon to 1 p.m. The Bengal Ministers remained with him up to 2 p.m. After this, Bapuji gave some dictation from his bed. He went to attend the prayer meeting at 5 p.m.

In his prayer speech Bapu said, "Those who have left their houses must return to them. The police must execute their duties properly. They should make no distinction between a Hindu and a Musalman. I have received complaints from Hindus that Muslim officers do not pay any attention to them, and from Muslims that Hindu officers neglect them. This should not happen.

"The Anglo-Indians complain that during the British regime they were accepted as semi-English; but today they are being insulted. They asked me whether or not the Swaraj Government would protect them? It would be a different matter if these people were invaders. It is for the Government to meet such an invasion. The people cannot deal with it on their own. But if they cast in their lot with Indians, no

*The man who attains equanimity of mind.

one should insult them. There should not, any longer be caste or communal distinctions. Let us all be Indians. Let us all live and die for India together. If we achieve this, the whole world will follow our footsteps."

Shaheed Saheb spoke about communal unity. He then referred to the harassment caused to Bapu by the shouting of noisy slogans and blocking the path of his car. He added, "All have been shouting national slogans since the advent of freedom. It is very good, but Gandhiji's ears cannot tolerate the noise. You should therefore preserve calm."

After the prayer, we went to the Jadavpur T. B. Hospital. It being impossible to visit each patient individually, we visited only those who were serious. A few patients who could walk had assembled in a corner. Bapu gave them a common message: "May God save you."

On returning home, Bapu wrote some important letters. He took half an hour's walk at 10 p.m. Being extremely tired, he took only milk and fruit.

Beliaghata,
27-8-1947

As usual woke up at 3.30 a.m. After prayers Bapu began writing letters. He found time for writing only in the morning. The rest of the day he was busy meeting visitors. This left him no time either for reading or writing. Between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. Bapu followed his daily routine of interviewes, rest, meal, application of mud-plaster, and spinning. Prayers were held at 5. p.m. at the Khidirpur grounds. Khidirpur is a labour area.

Addressing the labourers, Bapu said, "Labourers must not fight among themselves. Worshipping an

idol or repeating the Namaz is a personal affair. There should be no distinction made, on a communal basis in payment of wages. Greater skill would earn more. But I would like the employer to be himself a labourer, and a trustee of labourers. This is my ideal.

"The labourer has no need to live in helpless poverty. While employer's wealth is his money, the labourer's his hands and feet. Money can always be lost, yet the labourer retains his ability to earn his livelihood. Still, he insists on considering himself poor. But he must understand that the profits of crores of rupees are a result of labour, just as drops of water form the ocean through which vast vessels sail. A big top-flight engineer is as much a labourer as is a driver. All the labourers should unite and fix reasonable wage for themselves, and then tell their employers that they would require nothing more if they got good simple food—including milk, fruit etc., if their children were given education, and if they were supplied with well-lighted and ventilated house to live in. If this is effected it will unite the whole world. But if labourers insist that a Hindu labourer must have a Hindu employer, they will never be able to rise, nor will they be able to improve their employer. I think of myself as a farmer, a labourer and a Harijan."

Shri Suhrawardy spoke about communal unity and appealed to all the people to work under one flag. Accepting the responsibility for the insanitary conditions prevailing in the labour area, he said, "This filth has been here for years. It was my duty to remove it during my Premiership. But I am sorry to say that Hindu-Muslim riots broke out within two months of my being installed as Premier. I could

do nothing. But you must have patience. Things will be all right soon." As this was a predominantly Muslim area he explained the importance of the slogan 'Jai Hind'.

We returned home at 9 p.m. Bapu took some rest, ate fruit and milk, had a walk, discussed certain matters with Shri Suhrawardy and went to bed at 10.30 p.m.

28-8-1947

Prayer at 3.30 a.m. Bapu wrote articles for the *Harijan* and dictated some letters. He wrote a long letter to Jawaharlalji. He went for a walk at 7 a.m. During his meal he had letters read aloud to him and dictated replies to them. He then took some rest. It was past noon by this time. He then had a discussion with Shri Suhrawardy. Representatives of various bodies came for interviews one after another. Today's prayer meeting was held at the Science College.

Bapu addressed the boys and girls as follows:

"My association with students goes back to several years when any of you were not born. Hence I am no stranger to you. Your Vice-Chancellor had complained to me that you are undisciplined. It is a good thing to accept some one's control willingly. Every one should accept his teacher's control. Far from being degrading, it will lead to self-restraint. He is no student who does not practise self-discipline. According to Hinduism, a student is a *brahmachari* and should lead the life of a *sannyasi*. The fourth stage of life later on is also that of a *sannyasi*. He alone can follow the instructions of his *guru* who has obtained control over his senses. Your

Vice-Chancellor has taken his seat below. What did Shri Krishna do at the beginning of the Mahabharat War? Won over by love, he had accepted the position of a charioteer.

"I was not prepared for what I see here today. You have written abusive words for Shaheed Saheb on this board, which you have placed in front of me. The abuse, moreover, is in a foreign language. But you should understand that your asking him to go away is as good as telling me to do so, for we have now become partners. An insult to him is an insult to me. The Vice-Chancellor requested me to hold prayers here. But how can I come without my partner? You have insulted Shri Suhrawardy which is as good as insulting me, insulting your Vice-Chancellor and insulting your teachers. It is the duty of students to welcome an invited guest, whether they like him or not. I have studied the *Bible*, the *Kurane Sharif* and our Hindu Scriptures. All these give the same message, namely, that you must obey one who imparts knowledge to you—no matter whether you call him Teacher, Guru or Moulvi. If you do not want to obey him you should leave the school. A student should be humble, should remain unmarried, and keep away from carnal pleasures. I believe that students should one day hold the reins of the country. But if students, who are blind with sensuality, impertinent, addicted to smoking and drinking, are placed in charge of government, it would prove to be a disaster for the country."

Bapu requested Suhrawardy to abstain from making a speech today, as the students were in an excitable frame of mind.

We returned home at 9 p.m. Bapu wrote out his lecture and had a discussion with Shaheed Saheb. He took a walk at ten and went to bed at 10.30 p.m.

29-8-1947

Bapu woke up today at 2.30 a.m. He started on his writing at once as things had accumulated. The rest proceeded according to routine from 3.30 onwards. It included interviews, writing, rest etc. between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Today's prayer meeting was held at 5 p.m. at Toli Ganj. 'Vande Mataram' was sung at the end of the prayer. Bapu referred to this and said, "All had stood up during the recital of 'Vande Mataram'. Shri Suhrawardy asked me if he too should stand up. I advised him to do so as his not doing so might be misunderstood.

"But this is an English custom. Our custom is to sing in a straight sitting posture. We praise our mother land. 'Vande Mataram' does not belong to any particular sect. It has something mystic about it. Many have lost their lives for its sake. But the song must be set to a uniform tune and a uniform rhythm for the whole of India."

Bapu spoke a great deal about communal unity also.

Some Christians who came to meet Bapu asked, "The Hindus will stay in Hindustan and the Muslims will go to Pakistan. But what about us?"

Bapu said in reply, "You would never ask such a question if you thought of yourselves as part of the four hundred million Hindustanis."

Shri Suhrawardy said to the Muslims concerning the flag: "If you want to live as inhabitants of Hindustan you must accept the Tri-colour as your national

flag and salute it. Some one said that I shout 'Jai Hind' along with others only through fear but let me repeat to you that I too am a resident of this country and hence 'Jai Hind' means much to me as to the Hindus. It is an old one. But it was not in vogue formerly as India was undivided. Moreover, I am a resident of the Indian Union. My uttering of the slogan 'Jai Hind' is actuated by real faith. Nobody should have any doubt about me." He then appealed to the people to shout 'Jai Hind'.

We returned home at 9.45. p.m. As Bapu had not found any time during the day, he did his spinning now. He then took a walk and went to bed at 10.30 p.m.

Beliaghata,
30-8-1947

After prayers, Bapu wrote for the *Harijan*. He went for a walk at 6.30 a.m. and then had his massage, bath etc. as usual, and talked to Mr. Horace Alexander while taking his meal. After he left at 12 noon, Bapu began his silence and busied himself with writing matter for the *Harijan* till 3 p.m. with some rest in the middle. There were three to five interviewers. The prayer meeting was held at 5 p.m. at Balasore, which is sixteen miles from Calcutta.

Besides the problem of communal unity, Bapu was confronted with another: "India is starving. She is in a condition similar to that of London. But India does not get even sufficient cloth. Must not the millowners supply it?"

Bapu said in reply, " I shall suggest something else. Why should we beg of anyone? If I were a minister I would advise you to grow your own food. You can produce your own cloth as well. My

economics gives you the message of sacrifice. Perform it, and enjoy its fruit. My sacrifice does not mean offering oblations to fire. It means enjoying the fruits of your untiring labour. If all of us do labour uniformly and for a sufficient period, the condition of India will be changed. You must stop growing tobacco and substitute corn in its place. Noakhali is a golden land. It produces cocoanuts, fish and rice in abundant quantities. Is it not then a matter for shame that she should eat rice brought from Karachi? If everyone spins for his own cloth the mills will automatically close down.

We grow cotton in abundance, but no one wishes to listen to me! We have crores of hands to work, whilst the mills can, at the most, employ a lakh of people or so. The rest remain idle. But nobody wants to understand this simple arithmetic."

Shri Suhrawardy once again stressed the need for communal unity. Having gone in for a very bad cold today, Bapu lay down on his bed immediately after his return from the prayer meeting.

31-8-1947

Prayer and other routine matters were observed from 3.30 a.m. onwards. Bapu carried on his daily work in spite of his cold. He has decided to go to Noakhali. He discussed the matter with Shri Charubabu Choudhari and Pyarelalji who had come to meet him. There were visitors continuously from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. He went to the Grand Hotel at 3.30 p.m. The tradition of the Hotel had so far been that no Indian could enter its precincts. Bapu said in the course of his talk there, "I have come here in the capacity of a beggar. I am not a beggar of recent

standing; I have learnt the art of begging since my return from England. We have had to suffer great loss because of our riots. We must have money to make up for the loss. You might say that the Government should provide for this. But the Government now belongs to us. The Ministers of the Government are the servants of the people and are their representatives. If a bad Muslim or a bad Hindu commits a crime, we are all equally responsible for it. You should, therefore, contribute liberally towards relief work." Bapu also pointed out the need for communal unity.

Shaheed Saheb appealed for a crore of rupees! He exhorted the people to establish lasting unity.

From there we went straight to the prayer meeting at Bagmari. In his speech Bapu said, "We two had gone on a begging mission to obtain money for you, with a view to rebuilding the houses that have been burnt down and providing homes for destitutes." He then declared that he proposed to go to Noakhali on the 2nd, and appealed to the people to preserve perfect peace even during his absence. Bapu returned home, and after a short talk with Usmanbhai he went to bed as he had a slight temperature.

Bapu had thought of going to Noakhali this month. But he had to postpone his departure because of the outbreak of communal riots in Calcutta. He had stayed at Beliaghata in Calcutta and had established peace in the riot-affected city. One does not know if Bapu has to face any further test. Since the time Bapuji plunged into the problem of communal riots everyone was expecting him to undertake a fast at any moment. During the massacre in Bihar

it was expected every day that Bapu would go on a fast. But God's ways are different to that of man. Bapu was spared the ordeal of a fast in Bihar. But the fasting came when it was least expected; the test of Bapu's Truth was established at the beginning of this month; he succeeded so well that there has not been any further communal riot in Calcutta since then, due, of course, to the penance of the great saint.

CHAPTER VII
THE STORM

Haidari Mansion, Calcutta,
31-8-1947

A wounded man came here tonight. He had fallen down from a tram and had been injured. But people beat him and forced him to state that he had been assaulted by Musalmans. Some boys brought him here in procession at 10 p.m. Bapuji was sleeping. I woke up due to the noise and went outside. Abhabahen was already there at the door trying to pacify the crowd. I joined her in pacifying them and said, "Your noisy demonstration is painful both to the wounded man and Bapuji. Besides, we cannot hear what you have to say. You may, therefore, select two representatives from amongst you to explain matters to Abhabahen, who being a Bengali will understand you fully. And then we shall communicate your message to Gandhiji."

But it was impossible to check the boys.

It was 10 o'clock at night. There were only three of us in the whole building—Bapuji, Abhabahen, and myself. Shri Suhrawardy had gone out. Pyarelalji, Nirmalbabu, and Charubabu—who had come to

request Bapu to go to Noakhali — had also gone out. We were busy preparing for our trip to Noakhali, the following morning. But what was proposed by man was to be disposed by God.

The boys soon increased in numbers. They started breaking things. Stones were hurled at lamps and window panes, shattering them to pieces, there were two Musalmans in the house who were our hosts. The boys wanted to catch and kill them. They were running helter-skelter.

Bapuji had a very bad cold, and he was also observing silence. He got up and came out. Abhabahen and I were surrounded by the crowd. But a few among them, kindly disposed, suggested that we go inside the house. They were trying to save us from the anger of the crowd. Bapuji in the meantime arrived at the door and we immediately went to him. Bisenbhai was with us. The crowd mistook him for a Musalman and tried to assault him. The boys in the meantime saw Bapuji; this added to their excitement. They began to shout even more loudly than before. Bapuji broke his silence and shouted thrice: "What is all this? Kill me, kill me I say; why don't you kill me?" with these words he tried to rush amidst the crowd. We stood in his way to stop him going. In the meantime one of the Musalmans staying in the house ran and stood behind Bapu. Seeing him one or two boys threw brick-bats at him. Fortunately, they did not hit anyone; otherwise the hands of Hindu boys might have shed Bapu's blood. When I consider how Bapu ultimately met his death at the hands of a Hindu, I feel that this incident — of the 1st September, 1947 — was an indication.

Bapu said with a voice full of extreme grief, "My God is asking me where I am? I am extremely grieved. Is this the peace you have preserved from the 15th of August?"

Some of the military force arrived, and dispersed the unruly boys. Tear gas was used outside the building. We went inside at about half past twelve. Bapuji called Pyarelal and Charubabu. He said to them, "How can I go to Noakhali tomorrow? Do you think it proper that I should do so now? I do not know what God wills me to do. But, now, going to Noakhali is out of the question."

In the meanwhile Ministers, including Prafullababu and Annadababu, arrived. They told Bapu that they were going to arrest the Hindu Mahasabhaites including Shri....

Bapu said, "You should not arrest them. Throw the responsibility on their heads. Ask them what they want, peace or riots. Tell them that you want their help. See what reply they give."

The Ministers went away after being thus advised. It was 12.30 at night, still people were shouting outside and asked where the ruffian Suhrawardy was hiding. It was not until 1.30 a.m. that the disturbance subsided.

Today is Rakshabandhan* day. Abha and I had tied Rakshas on the wrists of a number of Muslim and Hindu brethren. Only Bapu had been left out. He said to us, "You can tie the Raksha on my wrist also. There is no difference between a daughter and a sister." We then tied the thread on his wrist as well, and it was in that very night that

*To tie a thread round the wrist as an amulet, for protection against evil.

the riot took place. We were talking amongst ourselves that if we were sincere in our tying the Raksha with God as our witness, Bapuji would come out safely from this ordeal. Abhabahen told me that it was as much our test as his. Both of us started praying in great earnest, saying: "Oh God! let the Raksha that we have tied have its effect. You alone are the real protector." We do not know whether God heard our prayer or not, but Bapu was protected, *albeit* in a different manner.

All of us went to bed at almost 2 a.m. Bapu woke us up at 3.30 for morning prayers.

Haidari Mansion, Beliaghata,
Monday, 1-9-1947

All this happened at night. We had no idea as to what would happen the following day, for we were all very anxious regarding the repercussions of the previous night's incident.

After the morning prayer Bapuji wrote letters to Sardar Patel, Chimanlalbhai, Prabhakarji, Dr. Sushila Nayar, Syed Jahir, Manibahen, Durgabahen, and Sushila Gandhi. He went for a walk at 7 a.m. The military was posted again, but the people allowed us to walk in peace. After the walk Bapu took his massage and bath. The news of the previous night's incidents had spread; people began to flock to our residence. A chain of interviews started. Bapuji looked extremely grieved and serious. He received a telegram from Jawaharlal to which he replied that he could not start immediately owing to the previous night's happenings. They were discussed with different visitors. At 1.45 p.m. Bapuji lay down to rest with a mud-plaster on his abdomen. He, however, received news that there had been an

outbreak of riots all over the city including crowded localities like Badabazar and Bowbazar. News poured in every ten minutes, adding greatly to Bapu's mental disturbance. Ordinarily, he took oranges or some other fruit every day at 2 p.m. But when he heard this disturbing news he refused to take anything. A few Musalmans who had returned to Beliaghata were attacked, and Nirmalbabu rushed to their help. He made arrangements to remove the Muslims to the Mohammedan area in a truck driven by his driver. Someone threw a bomb—from above—on the truck as it passed and two persons were wounded. When Bapu heard this he expressed his desire to see the wounded. Abhabahen had gone to the city to meet her uncle. The riots had started after her departure. She had not returned even at 2 p.m. Bapu was naturally very anxious about her. He wrote a note to me as follows: "You should remain at home. I shall go to see the wounded with a few others." I refused to remain behind. Bapuji, Nirmalbabu, Shailenbhai (A. P. representative) and I then left the house.

It was an awful sight to see blood gushing out of the chests of the wounded. Their bodies were covered with flies. Their eyeballs had been cut through. They seemed to be labourers. A four anna piece was lying near one of them—it had obviously fallen out of the waist band of his torn dhoti. We could not bear the sight of extreme grief on Bapu's face. He was deeply pained at the plight of these innocent men. Though I could bear the sight of the dead bodies, I could not bear the pitiable sight of Bapu's face. We returned home after seeing those two dead bodies. Shri Shailen Chatterjee asked Bapu what the latter proposed doing and whether he would undertake a

fast. Bapu wrote in reply, "You have guessed correctly. I am praying within myself. We have to see whether I receive any light by tonight."

Just then Abhabahen came back. She had been saved by sheer luck. Stones had been hurled at her car. She gave us a description of the city. Today prayers were held inside the house. The song which was sung gave the message that God never lets down His devotee.

Shaheed Saheb, N. C. Chatterjee and many others came while we were praying. All of them reported on the condition pertaining in the city. They were of the unanimous opinion that the Hindus had gone mad. But the Muslims too were making preparations for retaliation on a large scale, though they had not, as yet, broken the peace so far. One Marwadi gentleman asked if his community could be of any service.

Bapu replied, "As long as I myself do not take any step, I have no right to tender any sort of advice to others. I should very much like to enter the arena of massacre, but people will pursue me with the intention of saving me. They will not allow me to die in the fray. Last night when things happened here I wanted to rush to the place where sticks were being brandished. But these two girls did not allow me to go. The love that the people bear towards me will stand in the way of my going. Still, I would advise you to go where you can exert your influence and try to pacify the people, for I think that you will be able to assert yourselves in the areas where you have been running your big shops. If, however, they try to kill you, you should be ready to die." Some persons suggested that the Sikhs had created the whole trouble by avenging themselves for the Punjab atrocities.

Bapu said, "People do not understand that those who avenge shall themselves be avenged. I do not know what is to come. I am in the hands of God."

Bapu had five motions today, perhaps as a result of his disturbed condition of mind. When I asked him what he would eat he wrote in reply, "It is impossible for me to eat anything in this condition of grief. Even my eating in the morning was a mistake. There is no end to human folly. That is why man has to suffer."

After the visitors had departed, Bapu took a stroll. Then, he took some hot water with glucose. He did not eat anything. Then came the statements. Shri Shyamaprasad Mukarji also issued his statement. Rajaji came at 10 p.m. He left at 12 midnight, after a closed-door discussion with Bapuji and a few others. Abhabahen and I considered the possible result of these deliberations when we were overcome by sleep. When Rajaji left at midnight, Bapuji woke us and said, "You should not prepare any food for me from tomorrow onwards." Being aroused from sleep we looked at him in consternation. We did not immediately understand what he meant. I then asked, "But why Bapuji?" Bapu replied, "I am starting my fast tomorrow."

Abhabahen asked, "For how many days?" Bapu replied, "There is no fixed limit; fasting will continue until peace is established. I shall take nothing but water. I may use soda-bi-carb or lemon, if necessary. I shall succeed or I shall die. I cannot but die if peace is not to come."

Abhabahen and I just stared at each other. We had never before had occasion to nurse Bapuji during a fast. There was no one whom we knew. Bapuji

said, "It is now your responsibility. Keep yourselves fit. Be regular in food, exercise and sleep. Then alone shall you be able to nurse me."

Citing Ba's example he said, "Ba used to take great care of her health especially during my fasts, as she had to nurse me. You too should be very careful. There is no reason to be scared. Yours is the principal responsibility." After this we slept again at 12.30 a.m.

Among today's visitors were Shri Aryanayakam, officers from Bihar who had come to discuss the affairs of their State, Shri Shyamaprasad, the Secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha, Marwadi gentlemen, Pyarelalji, Charubabu, and Kshitishbabu. Rajaji was the last to arrive.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FAST—I

Beliaghata,
Tuesday, 2-9-1947

Prayer at 3.30 a.m. and then letters to Sardar, Manibahen and Rajkumaribahen. Asked me to write to Shri Chimanlal.

The song 'जीवन जब सुकाअी जाय' which poet Tagore had specially composed and sent to Bapuji during his fast (probably in the Yeravda Prison) was sung today at the morning prayer. Whatever Bapu wrote today contained only one thought which can be summarized in these words:

"Disturbance has again occurred here after fifteen days' peace. How can I go to the Punjab leaving Calcutta now? I was thinking what my duty was.

I very distinctly felt that I had no other weapon except fasting. This is the time to use it. Hence I have started my fast from 8.15 a.m. yesterday. I cannot say how long it will continue. God will spare me if He wants to take work from my body in this world. There can otherwise be no purpose in my living. No one should rush to me."

Shaheed Saheb issued a statement addressed to the Muslim population of East Bengal appealing to them to remain peaceful. He made a similar appeal to the Muslims of West Bengal.

Rajaji said in his statement, "I have failed in dissuading Bapu from undertaking the fast. But I may assure you that if you can preserve peace he intends going to the Punjab. The women and children of that province are longing for his *darshan*. It depends on you whether or not he goes there. We must save Bapu from this fast."

Volunteers of the Peace Brigade circled the city throughout the night. News kept coming that the city was still ablaze. Nirmalbabu gone to the house of Sharadbabu. From there, he will visit the place where the two boys had started the disturbance. Bapu got up at 8 a.m. Then he took his massage, bath etc. Dr. Dinsha Mehta examined him. Heart beats were missing at intervals. Four beats were found missing during nineteen minutes. Dr. Mehta told Bapu that he should drink more than four bottles of water. (Each bottle was of one pound). Bapu said, "Let me see how much I can drink. If only the name of Rama were to possess my mind, there will be no necessity for any effort on my part. I am extremely calm today. I would have had no sleep if it were not so." There were heavy rains—as if Nature too was

shedding tears; everything was full of sorrow. Having finished enema and bath by 10.30 a.m. Bapu took his usual seat in the room. He took eight ounces of plain hot water and took a long time to drink it. Nirmalbabu returned from Sharadbabu's house. He brought the news "The disturbance was started by the Sikhs and the Biharis. Bengalis joined them subsequently. Plundering is still going on on an extensive scale. They have burnt a Muslim hotel at the Sialda station." Sharadbabu thinks that there is a particular set of people who are behind all this. He has even got their names. The Hindus stabbed Shachin Mitra to death when he went to establish peace. Many others have also been wounded. Bapuji finished drinking his water at 12.30 p.m. taking an hour to do so. He directed that either Abha or I should remain nearby to render him ready service. (We had, of course, arranged our turns for being in attendance).

It seems Bapuji has now started feeling weak. His voice has become very low. He examined Shyamaprasad Mukarji's statement at 1 p.m. Then having rested up to 1.30 p.m. he took 8 ounces of hot water. Bisenbhai brought news that shooting and plundering were the order of the day in Zakaria Street. What could be done? The military, who had entered the Masjid, were harassing the people. Bapuji sent Bisenbhai. We had no provisions in our house. Biamma who had undertaken to supply us everything, had arranged to send us the stores, but as shooting was going on on the Sialda Bridge, the car bringing the provisions had to go back.

We read a few letters to Bapuji at 2 p.m. We could hear the sound of frequent shootings in the afternoon.

We received another telegram from Jawaharlal pressing Bapu to go to the Punjab soon. Bapu said, "I am now extremely happy within myself, for I feel that I am doing something worthwhile. I was so disturbed that I could not even sleep." Bapuji slept for three quarters of an hour while we rubbed ghee to his soles. Shri Aryanayakam came at 3.45 p.m. Nirmalbabu brought news that the police were not doing their work properly and that although there were no murders, looting was going on on a large scale. There was heavy shooting going on. Prafullababu suggested that the leaders of the various groups should meet at our place. Bapu need not be present. They should discuss and decide what steps should be taken. The Hindi, Urdu and Bengali newspapers should print and distribute three lakh copies each of Bapu's statement. He hoped that the situation would come under control. The Sikhs were mainly responsible for these particular riots.

Bapu drank six to eight ounces of cold water at quarter to four. He took half an hour to drink it.

Sharadbabu and Bakshi Hardvarji came at four p.m. The following is a summary of the former's conversation with Bapu.

Bapu: What can we do now?

Sharadbabu: Are you allowed to speak?

Bapu: I must speak when necessary. Rajaji argued with me for two hours, but he did not succeed. Being extremely intelligent, he advanced a number of arguments. But my mind refused to accept any of them. Rajaji ultimately sent a telegram to Jawaharlal. I told him that I could not leave Bengal in its present condition. I received another telegram from Muslims

that I should go to West Punjab instead of going to Noakhali. The third telegram is from Rameshwari Nehru stating that my presence in Lahore would relieve the situation. The army had not been able to achieve anything.

Sharadbabu: I was against partition. I have been always frank with you and speak to you without any reserve. And that is why I have come here today. I did not come before as I felt that you did not think me of any use to you.

Bapu: Many persons came here and discussed matters with me. Shri Devendra Mukarji of the Hindu Mahasabha, Shri J. C. Gupta, Shaheed Saheb and members of the Muslim League came to meet me. They asked me why I did not send for Sharadbabu, for they were suspicious that men of the Forward Bloc were responsible for these riots. I replied that Sharadbabu could come whenever he liked.

Sharadbabu : Your prayer speeches seemed to indicate that I was no longer of any use to you and that I was squandering money like water.

Bapu: In that case it is your duty to remove all doubts from my mind. Then alone can you be my friend. I address everyone as 'dear friend', for he alone is a true friend who deals without any reserve. Having thus addressed a person as 'dear friend' I write every thing that is in my mind. Even Shri Suhrawardy says that you are spending money like water. There was a time when I too was charged with having misappropriated vast amounts during the movement in South Africa, and of having deposited a lakh of rupees to my account in the Bank of India, although the fact has been that I had never saved a single pie for my self or for my children. But truth always wins. You

ought to have published your reply to the charge for the benefit of public, or you could have written to me. I would have immediately decided the case. This is what true friendship demands.

Sharadbabu: Let us now forget the past and come to the main issue. Have you got anything to say regarding the Forward Bloc?

Bapu: The Hindu Mahasabha says that the Forward Bloc is mainly responsible for these riots. But how can I judge without asking you to explain?

Sharadbabu: You may believe me or not, but I know most of the members of the Forward Bloc, and although it is very difficult for me to say so, I would make bold to state that many Hindu Mahasabhaites are responsible for this situation. I have even got their names. It is these persons who instigated the Sikhs, telling them that the Punjab being their home, they should not remain indifferent. This infuriated the Sikhs.

Bapu: I have given only one advice to those who come to see me, and it is that they should first make their minds clean. I have no physical strength, but the volunteers of the Muslim National Guard and the Hindu Mahasabha must go round the area of disturbance sitting in the same truck or car, or else they should plainly declare that they want to fight. But why this stabbing in the back? Moreover, why should the Forward Bloc people charge the Hindu Mahasabhaites and *vice versa*? How long can we rely on military help?"

Tea was brought in. Sharadbabu was fond of very strong tea. Bapuji, jokingly, said to him: "I should throw away such tea; but, perhaps, strong

tea is better than weak independence."(There was general laughter at this.)

Sharadbabu: The atmosphere prevailing in Bengal has deteriorated since the arrival of the armed police from the Punjab. Does Shri Suhrawardy propose to bring in European soldiers?

Bapu: No, not purely European but mixed forces. I told him, however, that there is difference between his and my way of thinking. There would be peace if all the volunteers were pure and clean in heart. But before this can be achieved you leaders must first see that you are pure in heart. The volunteers will be inspired by your purity of heart. You must first clearly declare what you aim to do; and then, all of you must start working towards its achievement. It matters not if any of the leaders die in the effort. Nay, I shall dance with joy if perchance all the leaders lose their lives while performing their duty with pure hearts. Only yesterday, a car carrying refugees was passing on the road, when some mad man threw a bomb which resulted in the death of two men. Manu was with me. I told her in writing that I was very grieved. I told Sitaramji, Vasantalalji and others who had come here, that they should remain where they were and should die, if necessary. I would, however, suggest that you meet Prafullababu. He is a Bengali and a lover of Khadi. Khadi has, however, almost disappeared, for it is a village industry and all village industries are on the verge of extinction. Only today I have received a letter from my grandson Kantilal discussing Khadi. I cannot write him a reply as I have no strength to do so. I asked Manu to write to him. The letter is in Gujarati or else I would have shown it to you. If you have the time, ask her

to tell you the contents. Abha being a Bengali can explain to you how very firm I am getting regarding my thoughts about Khadi. But this is a digression. We must take out a peace procession; but remember that nothing can be achieved if we are not truthful. Police or no police, we must organize the volunteers properly. Let all the police go away and let there be rivers of blood in Calcutta. I am confident I can meet such a situation. But you and I shall have to walk round bare-footed. Nobody should care whether it is day or night. Such is my mission. But I think that I stand alone in this way of thinking and I want your help. If you can give it, there is no reason to quarrel, for we shall then have achieved what we want. But if you want to fight I am prepared to instal the rioters as ministers. My men will resign the moment I tell them to do so. The real method is never to give any cause. Jawaharlal, Sardar and Rajendrababu used to come every day and ask for orders. But it is not in me to order anyone. Left to myself I would not import a single grain of corn or a single piece of cloth from other countries. I would solve the problem in my own way. But today I am all alone in this way of thinking.

It was 5.15 now and Prafullababu came with other members of the Ministry. Sharadbabu then rose to take his leave promising to do his best to maintain peace and look after the volunteers.

Bapu: I had myself sent back the military from here. But, unfortunately, it has come back to protect Shri Suhrawardy, as he is afraid. It was God's kindness that he was absent on Monday, the 31st. I cannot say what would have happened if he were here. He had gone home to make preparations for the Noakhali

tour. But now you better leave, lest these Ministers get cross with you as well as with me. I too might have lost my life on the 31st!

Prafullababu: I have nothing to say regarding your having started the fast from yesterday. But it would have been better if you had informed us and shown us your statement before you sent it to the Press.

Bapu: I too think that you ought to have been informed before publishing it in the Press. But I saw that things were terrible. I was considering what my duty should be. Rajaji came. He sat for two hours. He is a learned and kind person. But none of his arguments appealed to me. When I undertook a fast in the Yeravda Prison, Devadas and Lakshmi wept like children, but their tears had no effect on me. If I had given in I would have failed in my duty. I drank water by means of a tube at 5.30. If I do not take water I would not last long. I want to live for a week or so to see peace established. If, however, nothing happens within a week I see no chance of peace ever returning to Calcutta, and I do not wish to live to be a witness to such a state of affairs. It would be better if God took me away within this period. Rajaji insisted on my taking lemon juice. But I reckon lemon to be a fruit. [Bapuji was extremely tired after speaking for so long. He spoke while lying in bed. We had to keep our ears close to his mouth. This was the result of his one and a quarter hour's continuous discussion with Sharadbabu.]

Prafullababu: I have nothing to say.

Bapu: I had already said that Prafullababu would have nothing to say.

Prafullababu: Violence has spread all over India. The Hindus think that Gandhi is their enemy and he is suppressing them. You are free to fast if I commit any wrong, for you know me.

Bapu: All these arguments are of no avail. I had declared in Noakhali that I shall fast against the Hindus and from today I have secured the right to fast against the Musálmans as well. My fast now is for the good of both the communities. If the Hindus decide that they should keep their old man alive, peace will come of its own accord.

Prafullababu: Efforts are being made here to take revenge of the atrocities in Punjab. I have phoned Jawaharlalji; Kripalaniji is coming tomorrow. The burden of your fast is heaviest on me—of all the persons.

Bapu: You will die if you consider it a burden.

Shaheed Saheb now came. He said that the burden was on both Hindus and Musalmans, who should, together, go around the city and try to establish peace.

Prafullababu: I am meeting Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims tomorrow. Shall I ask them to come here or to my residence?

Shaheed Saheb: Not here; in the Minister House.

Bapu: Better ask them to your residence, and find out which of them would like to discuss matters with me. There was a similar problem during my twenty-one days' fast in the residence of the Ali Brothers.

Prafullababu: I had called a Press conference yesterday and asked help from them all. I shall suspend a paper if it indulges in false propaganda. Today there are not as many deaths as yesterday, but

plundering and incendiarism have continued unabated.

The Ministers left at 6 p.m. after this talk. Shri Shyamaprasad Mukarji had arrived in the meanwhile.

Bapu: Are you well?

Shyamaprasadji: How long will you continue the fast?

Bapu: Conditions have not improved. I am out to die. When I cannot do anything by going personally amidst the crowds, I must do something else; this is the only solution. I am absolutely calm.

Shyamaprasadji: But people in general are longing for peace so that they can get back to their usual life. Some people who have come from Dacca tell us that there too the atmosphere has been affected. The train was late by three or four hours, and rioting may start at any moment.

Bapu: If things continue here like this, any thing might happen there also. I have not the slightest doubt about this.

Shyamaprasadji: My people will go around the city from tomorrow and try to establish peace.

Shaheed Saheb: Shri P. C. Ghosh is holding a meeting tomorrow. We must issue more bulletins about Bapu's fast. The fast must end in two days.

Shyamaprasadji: When will you end your fast?

Bapuji: When you report that Calcutta has returned to normal.

Shyamaprasadji: Do you need a doctor?

Bapu: There shall be no effort to sustain the body in this fast. I shall be working up to the last moment. I can work the whole day and the whole

night if I so desire. I have got doctors here, so you need not send another.

Rain started again at 6 p.m. We had prayers at 6.30. The song *Vaishnava Jan To** was sung. Both of us were on the point of weeping. But we did not lose courage. While drinking water at 6.45 p.m. Bapu had a talk—of a general nature—with Shaheed Saheb.

I asked Bapuji, "Will not the country suffer if you die as a result of this fast? Will there be no fresh outbreak of violence?"

He replied, "Anything may happen. I am in the hands of God."

I asked again, "Suppose there is peace for a few days and then again there is an outbreak of violence!"

Bapu replied, "In that case the fast shall be unto death, and not even water will be taken. I shall not live to see whether there is peace or disturbance. If I continually repeat this, I shall be playing false to Truth and Ahimsa which are my God, and I shall not be able to wash off that sin in births to come."

Abhabahen and I pressed Bapu's legs up to 10 p.m. He drank four ounces of water thrice during the night and passed urine thrice. He was restless during the night but, on the whole, passed a good night.

Among today's visitors were Sharadbabu, Amiya Bose and Shashankshekhar. They discussed how far the Forward Bloc was responsible, and what could be done under the circumstances. The principal among other visitors were Shri Prafulla Chandra

*'He is a true Vaishnava'—Gandhiji's favourite song composed by a Gujarati saint-poet Narsimha Mehta.

Ghosh, Annadababu, Nripen Bose, Shyamaprasad Mukarji, N. C. Chatterji, Daven Mukarji, Major P. Wardhan, Makhanlal Biswas of the Hindu Mahasabha and Shaheed Saheb. Besides these there were a great many who came only for *darshan.*

CHAPTER IX

FAST—II

Haidari Mansion, Beliaghata,
3-9-1947

Bapuji awoke both of us as usual at 3.30 a.m. We brushed our teeth, had a mouth wash and attended the prayer. The song was *Tumi Bandhu Tumi Nath**. After prayers, Bapu talked to us for a while. He advised all the co-workers to fulfil their respective duties. He also told Pyarelalji and Charubabu who had come from Noakhali, "No one should stay here for me. Think of your own duties and execute them as best as you can. This will be the greatest service rendered me by you."

In the morning Bapu told Dr. Dinsha Mehta: "I passed the night without any trouble. I can drink water also. I am enjoying greater peace of mind during this fast than I ever did during preceding ones. I do not feel any impatience regarding the termination of my fast. If this condition continues, I hope to be able to sustain myself even for a month, in spite of the weakening of the body."

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*A hymn addressed to God meaning 'You are both, brother and master'.

Dr. Mehta interpreted this in a different light and said, "Yes, there would be no difficulty if you continue drinking water as at present."

Bapu said, "What I mean is something else. I feel that God is with me. What would He have me do? And if His name fills my mind I would not require even water."

Nirmalbabu had arrived in the meanwhile. He described the situation in the city. Bapu went for massage at 6.15. Dr. Mehta examined him. The blood pressure was 98/154. The heart beats were the same as yesterday. Massage was finished at 8 o'clock. He took his Bengali lesson and slept for a while during the massage. He finished his bath at 10 a.m. and went to his usual seat. He seemed to feel weak while walking.

Someone brought the news that looting continued up to midnight after which there had been peace. Bapu said, "If looting continued throughout the day what more could they do after midnight? Must not *goondas* too have some sleep?" He then warned both of us again, saying, "I depend exclusively on you two. I can of course do without you, but now that you are here, I rely upon you. If you fall sick, it will mean my death."

Mridulabahen phoned from Bihar at 9 a.m. She enquired about Bapu's health, and informed us that the fast was having a very good effect on Bihar.

Bapu did not have a shave today. He said he would have one only after the termination of his fast. Referring to his twenty-one days' fast in the Agakhan Palace, Bapu said, "I wanted to survive that fast, which was directed against the despotism of Linlithgow. Regarding this fast, I do not care whether I

live or die. Of course I hope that peace is established and that I may be able to live. But this fast will not go beyond ten days. There shall either be peace within that period or else I shall die. I know, from personal experience of a number of instances where ruffians have been converted to peaceful ways. I am a person who has had occasion to live amongst ruffians."

Bapuji drank eight ounces of hot water at 10.15 a.m. Shri Tusharkanti Ghosh brought news that the atmosphere in the city was improving. He said, "We should like to snap your photo, which will help us a good deal in our work for peace."

Bapu said, "I do not want to terminate my fast by making use of my picture in this way. The fast should end only when the people are convinced that what they have been doing is wrong."

Shri Surendra Mohan Ghosh, Kiranshankar Roy, a minister of Orissa and a few others came at 10.30 a.m.

At 11 a.m. Bapu scrutinized a few articles for the *Harijan*. Shrimati Renuka Roy arrived at 12.30 p.m. Bapu drank cold water. A few ladies suggested that they should arrange a procession in honour of Shachin Mitra who had been killed. One of the ladies spoke in English. Bapu said, "I do not wish to hear you speak in English. I am extremely grieved to see that you still use it. You have advanced a number of arguments in support of taking out a procession. What does it matter that he died in the cause of communal unity? Suppose I die and you want to carry my body in a procession. If I could then speak, I would surely tell you that you should not do so but should bury me here."

Bapu spoke with great sorrow and displeasure. In the end, we persuaded the ladies to leave. After their departure Bapu rested for a while. Rajaji phoned to say that students were trying to restore peace in the city, and that their slogan was "Down with *goondaism*".

Bapu started to dictate an article for *Harijanbandhu* to me. At 2 p.m. he fell into a nap for a few minutes. Sharadbabu phoned to enquire about Bapu's health and to inform us that he was trying his level best to restore law, order and peace.

We could hear the noise of a procession. A Muslim gentleman came and said that bullets fired from the Hospital at 9 o'clock had wounded four persons and killed four or five others. He requested Bapu to send his men to inquire into the matter.

Bapu said, "Am I not doing my best to stop the riots? That is why I have undertaken this fast."

The Muslim gentleman said, "God forbid that anything should happen to you. If so, a great catastrophe will befall us."

Bapu said, "You need not explain all this to me."

While Bapu was sitting up at a quarter to five, he asked, "What tree is this?"

I replied, "It is the Litchi tree."

"Is there no Neem tree here?"

Abhabahen replied, "Oh, yes, we have got one."

Bapu said, "You should both eat Neem leaves. Ba survived because she ate those leaves. I was her doctor in South Africa. There was no one else. I used to pluck Neem leaves, extract the juice, and make Ba drink it. On the thirteenth day Ba told me that she was feeling hungry and would like to eat

something. I gave her fruit. Gradually I started giving her banana and groundnut cake. She ate them. I then took her to Capetown. I did not give Ba or the children any milk, for I had seen the cruelty practised on milch cattle in Calcutta. I stated that it was quite possible to live without milk. But at Sabarmati, Santokbahen argued that milk gave lustre to children, so I started giving them milk.

"I used to read the *Ramayana* to Ba; she did not understand the *Gita*. She did however, understand the *Ramayana*. She read it in her own way, and when trying to sing the couplets she was always out of tune."

Bapu laughed over this last remark of his. The talk concerning Ba continued for some time. Bapu has been feeling the loss of Ba very much! This is his first fast after her death.

One or two persons suggested that they would like to stay with Bapu in order to render him service whenever he required it. Bapu said, "You need not stay here to serve my body. If you really wish to serve me, you should go to the areas where riots are going on and try to establish peace. That would indeed be real service in my opinion."

A joint procession of both Hindus and Muslims started from Beliaghata at 6.30. The processionists rushed inside to have Bapu's *darshan*. He said, "I shall stand in front of the window while you pass by if you preserve complete silence and do not shout slogans." The leaders of the procession said, "We cannot take that responsibility. It will be troublesome for Gandhiji if someone shouts a slogan." Hence two Hindu and one Muslim leaders of the procession came in to meet Bapu. The Muslim friend was weeping. He said, "Please give up your fast. We were

with you in the Khilafat fight. I take the responsibility of seeing that no Muslim in this locality creates any disturbance." The Hindu leader also promised to preserve unity. It was thus on the evening of the second day of the fast that the foundation of the hope for peace was laid by Hindus and Muslims by pledging themselves to Bapu.

Bapu replied, "I cannot terminate my fast unless the whole of Calcutta fulfils the condition which I have placed before you all. I have taken to fasting with God as my witness. God will preserve me and will guide you on to the right path if He wants me to render still greater service. Moreover, my fast can terminate only if the feelings that you have expressed today are also evident in the minds of the *goondas* as well. My breaking the fast merely at your behest will mean that I have forgotten my God." These words satisfied the leaders. Bapu encouraged them to work with greater zeal. We had prayers at 7 o'clock. Bapu then had the article for *Harijanbandhu* translated. Rajaji came at 7.15. He said, "There is more peace in the city today. The people as well as the military are trying to protect the people of both the communities."

Shri Kripalani, Lohia, Prafullababu and others came at 8 o'clock. They brought some letters from Delhi. Rajkumaribahen wants Bapu to go to the Punjab. Bapu said to Prafullababu: "I will write to them that the Chief Minister of Calcutta does not permit me to leave this place. (Laughter). How then can I go to the Punjab? You should not force the people to preserve peace merely for the sake of saving my life. I want to survive only if they can be persuaded without pressure, and they allow me to

live with real conviction in their hearts; otherwise it is better that I die, as death in that case will be more precious to me. Why should we be afraid of death, who alone is our true friend?"

Bapu slept at 9.30 p.m. He took five ounces of water twice during the night. Usually Bapu slept on the floor, but from today he started sleeping on a wooden charpoy.

CHAPTER X

THE MIRACLE OF CALCUTTA

Haidari Mansion, Beliaghata,
Thursday, 4-9-1947

Today is the fourth day of Bapu's fast. He got up as usual at 3.30 a.m. for prayers. The song *Charan Kamal Bandaun** was sung. Bapu slept again at quarter to six and got up at six o'clock. He drank six ounces of hot water. He took massage, enema and bath etc. between 6 and 9.45 a.m. He slept for a while during the massage. He drank hot water again at 9.45 after which he slept again for 45 minutes. Today he is feeling weaker and has a lower blood pressure. The pulse is rapid and he feels giddy when he stands up. Drops of oil with garlic were put into his ears to relieve the queer sensation he felt. His voice has become very low. God alone knows when he will come out of this ordeal.

While in this state of health, Bapu issued a statement that nobody should rush to his bedside. Shri S. P. Abdulla of Noakhali arrived at 10.45 a.m.

*Lord, I worship your lotus-fect.

Bapu said, "How wonderful! I was just wondering how I could arrange to meet him, when he has arrived of his own accord." Bapu talked to him for 5 or 7 minutes. He again started his work for the *Harijanbandhu*.

At 12 noon came a party of 35 *goondas*. Dr. Sinha was with us. He requested Bapu not to talk. Bapu stated that he would continue his talks in the fulfilment of his mission even up to his last breath. The 35 men confessed that they had committed murders and asking to be pardoned requested Bapu to terminate his fast. It is impossible to describe in words this wonderful sight. It could only be understood by those who actually saw it. It was a vivid picture of the victory that a small frail human being had been able to achieve, through sheer love, over *goondas* who always perpetrated inhuman crimes. On one side was Bapu lying on his bed with his emaciated body, while opposite to him were able-bodied but shame-faced men requesting Bapu, with folded hands, to terminate his fast!

Bapu said, "This alone is not enough for the termination of the fast. All of you must go to the Muslims and offer your services to them. As the Muslims are a minority here they must be protected. I shall break my fast only when my mind tells me that you are protecting them, and that permanent peace has been established."

At 2 o'clock a leader of the *goondas* named . . . who had instigated riots in Barabazar, came to meet Bapu. He confessed all his crimes and promised to hand over all his weapons to Bapu. He posted two of his boys to guard each of the Muslim shops. Then at 3.30 p.m. came a third party. The leader of this

party also confessed his crime and said, "Punish me. I and my whole party are ready to suffer any punishment that you may give, but please break your fast."

Bapu said, "My only punishment for you is that you should go to the Musalmans and serve them. I shall end my fast the moment I am convinced that your hearts are genuinely changed. But you have to work with speed, for I am impatient to go to the Punjab. My desire to live is due to my impatience to go to the Punjab. If you delay your mission, I shall not be able to sustain myself very long."

Sir Radhakrishnan arrived at 4 p.m. He bowed low before Bapu and took his leave after saying these few words, "May God give you life for the sake of the country." Many people kept coming for *darshan* up to 5 p.m. At 5.30 I received a note from Rajaji stating that there was peace in the city and that the atmosphere was full of joy. He would come to meet Bapu at night. Bapu was happy to read this note. After 5.40, he slept for a few minutes. He was extremely tired. At 6 p.m. Shri Surendra Mohan Ghosh, N. C. Chatterji and Shaheed Saheb arrived with representatives of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. One of the Sikhs said, "Kindly break your fast. We shall take the responsibility for whatever happens henceforth." All the others also promised in a like manner. Bapuji spoke for twenty-five minutes. He said, "I have had a passion for Hindu-Muslim unity since I was a child of twelve. This activity of mine is not of recent origin, it is for years that I have been doing it. I worked at it even during my stay in England. How can I then give it up now? You might not be aware of it, but my grandson Kantilal has written to persuade me to take up the Constructive Programme.

He feels that I should not continue my work for unity any longer. I wrote to him just today that this work is not of recent origin, and that if I give it up now, I cannot possibly do any constructive work. You argue that these riots are not communal, but they are the work of *goondas* only. Are we not responsible for the existence of the *goondas*? They cannot come into being of their own accord. I had two *goondas* with me at Rajkot. I took them to South Africa. They were ultimately improved and saw their mistake and when they came to meet me again at Sabarmati, they told me that they were no longer *goondas*. Thus, we ourselves are the makers and redeemers of the *goondas*. They cannot do anything by themselves. You request me to break my fast because of your love for me. Even the rioters came to request me to pardon them. I want to end the fast as quickly as I can, not because I wish to prolong my life but because my heart is in the Punjab. Jawaharlal has sent me telegrams. But I have not the courage to go to the Punjab leaving Calcutta in the state as it is. I now ask you two questions: (1) Are you in a position to assert that there will never again be a recurrence of disturbance in Calcutta? (2) If there be disturbance again are you sure that you would not come to report it to me, but that I shall only hear the news of the death of all of you? What I mean is that before the disturbance starts would you go and tell the rioters that they should kill you before they touch others? Failing this, I shall have to fast unto death as I had declared in Bihar. I do not want to be deceived. If you are not honest in your intention to help me you will be driving me to death. I want your honest reply to this."

Shaheed Saheb argued, " Suppose we die, why should there be any need for you to fast unto death? Is it proper that you should take such a vow?"

Bapu: " For the simple reason that it is the gentlemen *goondas* who are the real creators of trouble. A big city like Calcutta is bound to have many thieves and plunderers. God has not yet given me the power to win them over. But Hindu-Muslim unity has been my passion since my childhood. What I mean is that there should no longer be any more Hindu-Muslim riots in Calcutta in spite of the worst sort of situations in other parts of the world. I shall terminate my fast if all of you accept this responsibility and give it to me in writing."

This long talk exhausted Bapu. He started uttering *Rama, Rama*. He was feeling giddy and extremely restless. Abhabahen and I had been supporting him. He tried to lie down one moment and got up the next. He kept counting the rosary. All the visitors went to another room to decide what they should do. The leaders among them were Rajaji, Kripalani, Prafullababu and Shaheed Saheb. After an hour's discussion Nirmalbabu was the first to come in. All the leaders had given in writing that peace would be preserved in Calcutta, and that they would take the responsibility if anything untoward were to happen. They were prepared to die before any one else. The paper was signed among others by Shri N. C. Chatterji, Suhrawardy, Surendra Mohan Ghosh, Sharatchandra Bose, Sardar Niranjansinh, Devendra Nath Mukarji and R. K. Zaidka. The following was the exact wording:

"We, the undersigned, promise to Gandhi that peace and quiet have been restored in

Calcutta once again. We shall never again allow communal strife in the city. And shall strive unto death to prevent it."

This document was signed by the above mentioned persons. After this, Bapu directed that we arrange a prayer. There was the usual prayer with the singing of the song: "जीवन जव सुकाअी जाय" and the recitation of *Ramanama*. Shri Suhrawardy then offered Bapu a glass containing one ounce of sweet lemon juice exactly at 9.15 and having bowed down to him in the Hindu style burst into tears. Before drinking the juice, Bapu spoke a few words in Hindi. He said, " I want to say something to you before I break my fast, which I am doing, as I desire to do something for the Punjab also. This fast is being broken solely because of my trust in you. I have not taken any other factors into consideration. It would be extremely bad, if there is anything for which I shall have to repent later. Of course, I would like to live. Many people tell me that it is better that I live as they feel that I shall then be able to render greater service. I have enough vitality left to live and I would live. I do not wish to be caught in a trap knowingly. I expect that all the Hindus and Musalmans who are present here would see that I have no occasion to fast again. Rajaji asked me the very first day whether I had any hope when undertaking the fast. I replied that I would not be allowed to carry on the fast very long. It is three days now; it could as well have been thirty days!

"And still I want to warn you once again lest you sleep over today's decision. It will have its effect on Noakhali as well as on the Punjab. There are turbulent Muslims in Noakhali. If things take a nasty turn

here, how can I stop them there? Calcutta is the key to the peace of the whole of Hindustan. You may earn wealth if you want; you may build mansions for yourselves if you like, but Calcutta should have no more disturbance even if the whole world were reduced to ashes. May God endow you with the ability to think wisely. These girls have just sung the couplet which prays to God to bestow on all the power to do the right thing."*

When, after these words spoken in Hindi, Bapu started drinking the juice, all the people uttered simultaneously the name of *Narayan*. The atmosphere was at once filled with joy. I ran to phone the persons concerned, but I could not get my turn on the phone. It was after half an hour that I got a chance to use it; I communicated the good news to Manibahen Patel, Rajkumaribahen and others. Needless to say that all of them were most pleased to hear what I had to tell them.

Bapu said to Rajaji, "I wish to start for the Punjab tomorrow." Kripalani objected to his leaving so soon. Shaheed Saheb suggested a compromise, saying, "How can you go away without attending a public prayer meeting? If we arrange one tomorrow people will crush you with affection. Let us hold it the day after."

At ten o'clock at night many persons came with their weapons — rifles, cartridges, bombs etc. Bapu looked at them with interest, and asked the owners if they were in the least sorry to surrender them? They replied that they were not.

Bapuji slept at 11.30 p.m. We heaved a sigh of relief at the dispersal of the dark clouds which had

*The couplet, ओश्वर अल्लाह तेरे नाम, सबको सन्मति दे भगवान।

gathered during the seventy-three hours of the fast, and expressed our sincerest gratitude to God.

CHAPTER XI

LEFT CALCUTTA

Haidari Mansion, Beliaghata,
Friday, 5-9-1947

Bapu passed the night without any undue discomfort. He joined us for prayers at 3.30 a.m., after which he took some falooda, hot water and glucose. He then slept again and got up at 5.45 a.m. He read some letters. Abha and I were so happy today — being relieved of a great responsibility — that, in accordance with our usual practice of eating and working together, we went to drink our morning coffee together. It was only after we had finished that we realized that Bapu had been left all alone. As soon as we returned, he laughed and said, "Do not imagine that I have regained my former strength so quickly. Either of you should remain with me. I would like it if most of my work were done by you two. In Noakhali, Manu did all my work including correspondence, accounts and personal service. Now that you both are with me I would like to divide the work between you two."

Bapu went through his usual routine of massage, bath etc. between 6.30 and 9.35 a.m. after which he took some soup and mashed vegetables. By the time he finished his meal, more rioters had come to surrender their weapons to him. Officers receiving salaries worth thousands had been employed to catch them, but they were now caught and brought to

Bapuji by the power of his love. Some were large weapons like stenguns and spears. Others were rifles, knives, cartridges and bombs.

In the afternoon Bapu went through Nirmalbabu's article for *Harijan* regarding the fast. Shaheed Saheb came to consult Bapu as to what he should do. Bapu advised him that he should overcome greed for power if he really wanted to be redeemed. Shrimati Renuka Roy requested Bapu for a message to students. He had the sentence 'My life is my message' translated into Bengali and gave it to her. At 4 p.m. he had a mud-plaster put on his abdomen and lay down to sleep. He got up at 5 p.m. after nearly an hour's sound sleep. He then discussed Ashram matters with Aryanayakamji. An Agarwal gentleman who was doing mill-store business in Calcutta came and said to Bapu, "You have broken your fast, but you have been deceived. There is no peace anywhere in the city. The two communities do not enter each other's localities. Trams and buses are not plying. Where then is peace?"

Bapu said, " Give me all this in writing, as I shall be happy if what you say is proved to be true. I shall undertake a fast unto death, and those who affixed their signatures yesterday will thus be proved false."

Kripalaniji came after the prayer. Bapu told him of the above and added, " Please tell the signatories that if they signed the paper merely to save my life, they will not succeed. The leaders must be very careful. If there are riots again in Calcutta I shall fast until death, wherever I be."

After this came Shri C. R. Das' daughter. Bapu casually told her during the conversation, "I have a

greater responsibility now. If anything happens in Calcutta all of you will prove to be my murderers."

Bapu did a lot of work throughout the day. His weight today was 113, the same as it was before he started the fast. It seems that there is an accumulation of water in his stomach.

Having sent a telegram to Jawaharlal telling him to reach Delhi, we went to bed at 9.30 p.m.

Haidari Mansion, Beliaghata,
Saturday, 6-9-1947

After the morning prayer at 3.30 a.m. Bapu compelled both of us to sleep. He had taken castor oil. He made us sleep and walked to the commode by himself. He did not wake us although he was not yet fit to stand the exertion. He started to feel giddy soon and woke Abhabahen. She saw that Bapu's eyes had begun to go in; she shouted for help. I rushed to him and Bisenbhai also came with Dr. Mehta. All of us helped Bapu to his bed. "If I succeed in implanting *Ramanama* in my heart, I shall not be required to seek anybody's help like this. I have not attained it still, but I have been trying for it." were his words.

He had his usual programme of bath etc. between 8 and 10 a.m. He ate vegetables, soup and two thin *chapatis*. He has not yet started taking milk.

Dr. Sushila Nayar arrived from Delhi at 1 p.m. and she conveyed the news of the terrible plight of the Punjab, the Wah camp and Delhi city. Bapu rested between 1.30 and 2 p.m. Interviewers started calling on Bapu. There was a big crowd of people who had assembled for *darshan*. Bapu went to the

Monument ground for prayer. There was a vast assemblage and it was raining.

Bapu said in his prayer speech, "My breaking the fast makes it imperative that all of us be much more cautious now. Let us work with God as witness. Bengal must remain calm, even if the whole of Hindustan is reduced to ashes. If you can preserve your sanity I shall work a miracle. It would be wonderful if the Muslims and Parsis are as free to read the *Koran* and the *Zend Avesta* as the Hindus in Bengal are to read the *Gita*, to recite the *Gayatri* and perform *sandhya*. The miracle which you showed on the 14th of August was of your making, not of mine or of Shaheed Saheb's. It is as if we simply ate the food which had been already prepared.

"You will keep me alive, if you keep peace. I have come here today to bid you good-bye. I have received very lengthy telegrams from the Punjab. I must tell you that I have been an expert in these matters. I am not indulging in any sense of pride in saying this, but I have a passion for this work since my childhood. If you revert to madness after I leave this place, it would be as silly as dancing on an earthen pot! You should tell me with smiles on your faces, 'You may go from here. You will always hear that Bengal has preserved peace.' As to me, my life now is dedicated to the 'Do or Die' mission.

"And those who have pledged themselves in terminating my fast, Shri N. C. Chatterji, Shaheed Saheb, Surendra Mohan Ghosh and others, shall be the first to die, if anything happens here now. As to myself I assert that I have never indulged in false flattery of anyone, nor have I been afraid of anyone. God alone judges all and He shall judge

us too. A person who relies on the judgements of God alone, would never bother whether the ministers are corrupt or whether they are unjust.

"And even if you want to fight, against whom will you fight? Against your own brothers? I request those who have weapons to surrender them. Weapons will not save anyone; God alone is the saviour of all, so seek His protection."

Shaheed Saheb said in his speech, "It is our bad, as well as good luck. Bad luck, because after nearly three weeks' friendly co-existence since the fourth of August, we again reverted to riots, which compelled Mahatmaji to go on a fast. It is our good luck that we have again united within seventy-three hours and have enabled Mahatmaji to terminate his fast, and he is now taking leave of us, leaving behind him an atmosphere of purity."

Having then appealed for peace, he declared, "I shall now work according to the instructions of Mahatmaji."

We returned from the prayer meeting at 8.30 p.m. Bapu conversed with Rajaji for an hour during his spinning, and after some casual conversation with one or two other persons, he went to bed at 10 p.m.

He took four ounces of milk mixed with apple after returning from prayers.

Haidari Mansion, Calcutta,
7-9-1947

Prayers at 3.30 a.m., then wrote a few letters. As he was sleepy he went to bed again.

Got up at 6.15 and went for a walk. This being Bapu's last day in Calcutta we found it very difficult

to stop the crowds of people who kept coming for his *darshan*. Bapu finished his massage and bath between 9 and 10 a.m. The crowd outside was as large as before and the people sat in the hot sun. Bapu went to the door to meet them. At 10 a.m. he took *chapati*, vegetable, milk and fruit in small quantities.

Abhabahen and I started packing up for the journey. We had to collect every little thing of Bapu's daily use. There would be no end to our plight if we were to lose even a small thing!

Bapu started his period of silence and worked for *Harijanbandhu* between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. The Ministers accompanied by Shankarrao Deo and Kripalaniji came at 1.30. They were with him up to nearly 3 p.m. After this, Bapu rested for some time and then he went out among the crowds who were waiting for his *darshan*. He held prayers on the ground in front of the house at 4 p.m. He spoke only a few words after the prayer. He appealed to all to preserve peace. There was much noise as the place was too small to contain the big crowd of thousands. Moreover, Bapu was extremely tired.

At 8.30 p.m. some girls came with garlands and bouquets to bid farewell to Bapu. A small one from amongst them offered him *arati**. Bapu said to her, "Child, put out this lamp and give the whole quantity of ghee therein to some poor man. How can you waste so much ghee in offering *arati* to me? The poor do not get a chance to even see ghee these days."

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*Adoration by encircling the head of the object adored by lights.

At 9 p.m. we reached Balipur station. Bapuji walked for a while as the train was to arrive after some time. Shaheed Saheb and other Ministers had come to see him off. All of them bowed down to Bapu and Shaheed Saheb's eyes were wet with tears when the train pulled out of the platform. That a man like Suhrawardy should shed tears seems improbable. The sight of someone being stabbed during a riot might cause grief and bring tears to one's eyes, but the knife of love prepared by Bapu out of *Ahimsa* and *Satya* had melted hard-hearted persons like Shri Suhrawardy. Such sights are sure to convince one that his weapons are absolutely infallible.

Our train started at 9.30 p.m. sharp. We were on our way to Delhi. Bapu started on his period of silence once again.

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